Program on Extremism

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

universität wien

THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN AUSTRIA

Dr. Lorenzo Vidino

August 2017

Table of Contents

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 1

DISCLAIMER 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2

INTRODUCTION 4

SECTION I. THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN THE WEST 5

I.I What is the Muslim Brotherhood? 5

I.II The Muslim Brotherhood in the West 6

I.III Three Categories of the Brotherhood in the West 8

I.IV The Brotherhood's Ideology in the West 10

I.V Assessing the Brotherhood in the West 13

I.VI The 2014 British Government's Review of the Brotherhood 14

SECTION II. THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN AUSTRIA 15

II.I The Pioneers 15

II.II Brotherhood Spawns 19

II.III Organisations Influenced by the Brotherhood 30

SECTION III. IS THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD A THREAT? 35

III.I The Brothers and Social Cohesion 37

III.II The Dynamics of Political Outreach 42

CONCLUSION 50

About the Author

Dr. Lorenzo Vidino is the Director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University. An expert on Islamism in Europe and North America, his research over the past 15 years has focused on the mobilisation dynamics of jihadist networks in the West; governmental counter-radicalisation policies; and the activities of Muslim Brotherhood-inspired organisations in the West.

A native of Italy who holds American citizenship, Dr. Vidino earned a law degree from the University of Milan Law School and a doctorate in international relations from Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He has held positions at Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government, the U.S. Institute of Peace, the RAND Corporation, and the Center for Security Studies (ETH Zurich).

The author of several books and numerous articles, Dr. Vidino's most prominent work is The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West, a book published in 2010 by Columbia University Press, with an Arabic edition released the following year by the Al Mesbar Studies and Research Center. The book offers a comparative study of Islamist organising in various Western countries as well as the wide-ranging public policy responses by Western leaders.

Dr. Vidino has testified before the U.S. Congress and other parliaments; advised law enforcement officials around the world; and taught at universities in the U.S. and Europe. He regularly provides commentary to diverse media outlets (including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, PBS, CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, BBC, Al Jazeera, *Al Arabiya*) and is a columnist for the Italian daily La Stampa. In 2016, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi appointed Dr. Vidino as Coordinator of the National Commission on Jihadist Radicalization.

Disclaimer

Given the complexity of the subject, the report does not aim to be a comprehensive guide to the movement's networks and aims in the country. Nor does it seek to provide a blueprint for Austrian policymakers on how to deal with the Brotherhood.

Rather, it seeks to trace part of the history and evolution of the movement and those groups and individuals organically or ideologically affiliated with it in Austria. Given both the infeasibility of providing a complete picture and the paucity of studies on the subject, it seeks to provide a base for further and more specific studies.

This study was realized in cooperation with the University of Vienna, Institute of Near Eastern Studies and with support from the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) and the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung (BVT).

Executive Summary

This report seeks to provide a preliminary overview of the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Austria.

The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 in Egypt by Hassan al Banna, is the world's oldest and arguably most influential contemporary Islamist movement. Its core belief views Islam as a complete and all-embracing system, governing all aspects of private and public life. It advocates a bottom-up, gradual Islamization of society that would eventually lead to the formation of a purely Islamic society and political entity.

The Muslim Brotherhood has spread globally, including to many Western countries since the late 1950s and early 1960s. In each country, the movement has taken on different forms, adapting to the local political conditions. All these entities work according to a common vision, but with complete operational independence. There are consultations and constant communication amongst the branches, but each is free to pursue its goals as it deems appropriate. While retaining solid links to the Middle East, Brotherhood entities in the West have acquired a substantial level of autonomy, reshaping part of the Brotherhood's ideology and tactics to fit into non-Muslim majority societies.

Organisations and individuals linked to the Brotherhood in the West can be summarily divided in three categories according to the intensity of their links to the mother group:

- *Pure Brothers*: members of various branches of the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the Middle East who have established presences in the West, but remain part of the formal structure and are directly dependent on the branches in the Middle East.
- *Brotherhood spawns*: organisations established by individuals with strong personal ties to the Brotherhood, but which operate completely independently from any Brotherhood structure.
- *Organizations influenced by the Brotherhood*: organisations founded by individuals with some ties to the Brotherhood that have somewhat dwelled in ideological surroundings that are very close to the movement, but have no clear organisational ties to it.

Individuals and organisations that belong to each of the three categories have operated for decades in Austria, creating a sophisticated web of entities, charities, educational academies, and businesses, and obtaining a disproportionate level of visibility and power, considering the small number of Brotherhood members and sympathizers in the country. This pattern is common to most Western countries, as organisations linked to the Brotherhood have often managed, thanks largely to their access to large resources and organisational skills, to become privileged interlocutors of Western elites within Western Muslim communities. Western observers tend to over-estimate the representative nature and underestimate/ignore ties between the MB and these organisations.

Following a pattern similar to most European countries, over time, various Austrian organizations linked to the Brotherhood milieu have been entrusted with administering integration measures, various aspects of Islamic religious education in Austria and, since 2015, aiding in the reception of the large influx of Muslim migrants.

Western elites and governments engage and, at times, partner with Brotherhood organisations for several overlapping reasons. In some cases, the

need for a well-structured and organized partner within the Muslim community overrides concerns about the Brothers' views and aims. Authorities also seek to maintain a dialogue with the MB in order to avoid its radicalisation. In some cases, outreach to the MB is seen by some political forces as a way to ensure electoral successes.

The MB is a designated terrorist organization in Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and a handful of other Middle Eastern countries, but neither Austria nor the European Union have designated the organisation. Despite some overlaps in ideology with Salafist and jihadist milieus, it would be a grave analytical mistake to lump the Brotherhood's ideology together with these groups.

Nonetheless, the Brotherhood promotes a narrative that, through its use of victimhood and justification of violence, creates a fertile environment for radicalisation. Western Brotherhood entities have purposely exaggerated anti-Muslim incidents and attitudes (which unquestionably exist) to foster a siege mentality within local Muslim communities, arguing that the government and Western societies are hostile to them and to Islam in general. This dynamic has been particularly evident in Austria over the last few years. At the same time, the MB sees violence as legitimate in cases in which it views Muslims as under threat or occupation. Leaders and branches of the Brotherhood worldwide, including in Austria, have raised funds for Hamas, the Palestinian branch of the Brotherhood, and endorsed terrorist acts against Israeli civilians. The spread of this narrative of victimhood mixed with justification of violence should be seen with concern given the massive rise in radicalisation seen throughout Europe during the last five years.

The Brothers' narrative is also problematic when it comes to its impact on integration and social cohesion. While Western Brotherhood spokespeople tend to publicly adopt more nuanced and less controversial views, their representatives in the Middle East or some of the less visible members of the milieu in the West condemn Western societies as corrupt, immoral, and unjust, as well as inferior to Muslim societies. Their positions on religious freedom, women rights, and gay rights are similarly problematic and at odds with European values.

The perception of the MB by Austrian politicians and representatives of the state is heterogeneous. On one hand, there are critical voices in politics, the media, and academia. Austrian security services have publicly labelled the MB as a threat to the social cohesion of Austrian society. On the other hand, organisations and individuals close to the Brotherhood can count on a well-established network of supporters within political, institutional and media circles.

Analysis produced by the report shows the deep personal, organizational, financial, and ideological interconnectivity among the individuals and organisations of the Muslim Brotherhood milieu in Austria.

Introduction

In April 2014, various Egyptian and international media organisations reported that the Muslim Brotherhood was planning to relocate its headquarters to the Austrian city of Graz.[1] The story was unfounded, and the relocation claims were likely part of a campaign orchestrated by elements of the Egyptian political system to prevent Brotherhood members from re-settling in European countries after the June 2013 overthrow of Mohammed Mursi and subsequent crackdown on the Brotherhood in Egypt. Contrary to the media reports, there is no such thing as the "Muslim Brotherhood headquarters"; the movement is quintessentially transnational with branches in dozens of countries. Three years after this story initially reported, there are no signs that the Egyptian branch of the Brotherhood—its oldest and most important—has moved its base of operations to Austria. Rather, its activists in exile are scattered throughout Turkey, Qatar, the UK, and a handful of other countries (including Austria, although numbers are relatively low).

Despite the more outlandish and conspiratorial claims of these reports, there was a basis to these stories. Various national branches of the Muslim Brotherhood (not just the Egyptian, but also the Syrian and Palestinian Brotherhoods) have a long-established presence in Austria: some of their networks first appeared in the1960s. Since their inception, Austrian-based Brotherhood networks have grown and developed, adapting their tactics and changing their priorities. They have directly or indirectly spawned several affiliate organisations, some of which play central roles in the development of Austrian Islam. And they have become the main interlocutors for the Austrian government when dealing with the country's growing Muslim communities.

The issue is not without contention and political consequences. Virtually every aspect of the Muslim Brotherhood, from how it works to who its members are, from where it stands on many issues to, ultimately, whether it poses a threat or not (and, if so, of what nature) has been debated interminably within European and Austrian policy and academic circles – without resolution. This confusion, which has often resulted in conflicting policies, is somewhat understandable given the movement's complexity, opacity, and the differences among its global spinoffs. Yet it is critically important for all European policymakers to determine whether the Muslim Brotherhood operates in their country, and if so, understanding how it operates and what its aims are. This understanding is particularly important during times of intense debates about extremism, massive migration, and integration of Islam in European societies.

This report seeks to provide a preliminary overview of the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Austria. Given the complexity of the subject, it does not aim to be a comprehensive guide to the movement's networks and aims in the country. Nor does it seek to provide a blueprint for Austrian policymakers on how to deal with the Brotherhood. Rather, it seeks to trace part of the history and evolution of the movement and those groups and individuals organically or ideologically affiliated with it in Austria. Given both the infeasibility of providing a complete picture and the paucity of studies on the subject, it seeks to provide a base for further and more specific studies.

1. "Sources: Office of the transfer of the international organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood from London to 'Graz' in Austria," *The Cairo Post*, April 7, 2014. http://www1.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=1599763#.U9vSsfldVbh; "Muslim Brotherhood moves headquarters from London to Austria after Cameron announces terror investigation," *Daily Mail*, April 12, 2014. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2603383/Muslim-Brotherhood-moves-headquarters-London-Austria-Cameron-announces-terror-investigation.html

SECTION I

The Muslim Brotherhood in the West

I.I What is the Muslim Brotherhood?

The Muslim Brotherhood is the world's oldest and arguably most influential contemporary Islamist movement. The first crucially important yet extremely challenging task related to any analysis on the movement's presence in a country is to define the term "Muslim Brotherhood". Arguably, the term is most commonly used to refer to the organisation that Hassan al Banna founded in Egypt in 1928. Coining what would become the motto of generations of Islamists ("Islam is the solution"), al Banna viewed Islam as a complete and all-embracing system, governing all aspects of private and public life. Even though he did not shun violence as a political tool, he advocated a bottom-up, gradual Islamisation of society that, starting with the reformation of individuals, would eventually lead to the formation of a purely Islamic society and, as a natural consequence, political entity.

The organisation he created immediately attracted large support within Egypt, becoming one of the most important players in Egyptian political life during the past eighty years. However, since the 1940s, the Brotherhood's message has spread to over ninety countries (virtually all Muslim-majority countries and many countries where a Muslim minority exists). In each country, the movement has taken on different forms, adapting to local political conditions. In Middle Eastern countries where it has been tolerated by the government, like Jordan, it has existed as a social movement, devoted to educational and charitable activities, and as a political party. In those where it has been persecuted, like Syria, it remained an underground movement devoted to *dawa* (proselytizing) and, in some cases, to violence. In the West, it adopted locally familiar forms, such as civil rights groups and religious and lobbying organisations.

All these entities work according to a common vision but with complete operational independence. There are consultations and constant communication, but each entity is free to pursue its goals as it deems appropriate. Like any movement that spans continents and has millions of members and sympathisers, the global Muslim Brotherhood is hardly a monolithic bloc. Personal and ideological divisions are common. Divergences emerge on how the movement should try to achieve its goals and, in some cases, even on the goals themselves. Senior scholars and activists often compete with one another over theological issues, political positions, access to financial resources, and leadership of the movement. Despite these inevitable differences, their deep belief in the inherent political nature of Islam and their adoption of al Banna's organisation-focused methodology make them part of the informal transnational movement of the Muslim Brotherhood.

In a 2008 interview, Mohamed Habib, then first deputy chairman of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, confirmed this assessment of the organisations that locate themselves in the Brotherhood's galaxy:

> *There are entities that exist in many countries all over the world. These entities have the same ideology, principle and objectives but they work in different circumstances and different contexts. So, it is reasonable to have decentralisation in action so that every entity works according to its circumstances*

and according to the problems it is facing and in their framework.[2]

The term Muslim Brotherhood, therefore, can describe the individual entities that operate in each country as well as a global informal movement in which like-minded individuals interact through an unofficial yet very sophisticated international network of personal, financial, and especially ideological ties. In a 2005 interview, Mohammed Akef, the former *murshid* of the Egyptian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, described it as "a global movement whose members cooperate with each other throughout the world, based on the same religious worldview—the spread of Islam, until it rules the world."[3] He added: "A person who is in the global arena and believes in the Muslim Brotherhood's path is considered part of us and we are part of him." Other senior members of the Brotherhood have described it as a "common way of thinking" and "an international school of thought."[4]

Despite the general informality of the movement, an international structure does exist. In 1982, the formal International Organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood was established as "a comprehensive Islamic body working to establish Allah's religion on earth," composed of several institutions (a General Guide, a Guidance Bureau and a Shura Council) assigned to coordinate the activities of the various branches.[5] Uniting some of the top leaders of Brotherhood branches from several countries in the Arab world—but with the Egyptians always dominating—the International Organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood aimed to craft a unified strategy for the movement, arbitrating internal conflicts and dividing funds.

The experiment largely failed. Travel bans and other security restrictions prevented members of the various branches from travelling freely and meeting regularly. Most importantly, the attempt to create a multinational organisation failed because of the reluctance of all branches to accept the leading role the Egyptian branch had reserved for themselves. If the Egyptians had in mind a sort of Soviet-style "Muslim Comintern," with Cairo in lieu of Moscow, other branches and affiliates rejected the idea, opting for more decentralization. Despite these difficulties, the International Organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood still operates today and has in London-based Egyptian Brother Ibrahim Mounir one of its most important elements.

I.II The Muslim Brotherhood in the West

If the evolution of each national branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East took particular turns based on each country's political culture and developments, the Brotherhood's history is especially peculiar in the West, where it operated in non-Muslim majority societies. The first active presence of the Brotherhood in the West can be dated to the late 1950s and early 1960s when small, scattered groups of militants left various Middle Eastern countries to settle in cities throughout Europe and North America. A handful of these pioneers, like Said Ramadan and Yussuf Nada (whose presence in Austria will be discussed later), were hardened members of the Egyptian Brotherhood fleeing the crackdown implemented by Nasser in the mid-1950s. In the following decades, Brotherhood members from other Middle Eastern coun-

2. "Interview with MB Deputy Chairman in *al Ahrar Daily*." Ikhwanweb.org, Official Website of the Muslim Brotherhood, June 16, 2008. http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=17267&LevelID=1&SectionID=0
3. Interview in *Asharq Al-Awsat.* December 11, 2005.
4. Yussuf Nada, interview by Lorenzo Vidino, July 2008, Campione d'Italia; Dr Abd El Monem Abou El Fotouh, interview by Lorenzo Vidino, December 2008, Cairo.
5. Kamal Helbawy, interview by Lorenzo Vidino, December 2008, London; Israel Elad Altman, "Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, 1928–2007," *Monograph for the Hudson Institute* (January 2009), 5–6.

tries similarly found refuge in the West from the repression of local regimes. Yet, the majority of Brotherhood-linked activists relocating to the West were students, members of the *intelligentsia*, and urban middle classes of the Middle East who had already joined or had flirted with the idea of joining the Brotherhood in their home countries. Settling in the West to further their studies in local universities, these students continued their involvement in Islamic activities in their new environments.

The combination of experienced militants and enthusiastic students bore immediate fruits, as Brotherhood activists formed some of the West's first Muslim organisations. Most Western cities at the time lacked Muslim places of worship and the Brothers' mosques, generally little more than garages or small meeting rooms on university campuses, often became the first religious facilities for Western Muslims. The West's freedoms allowed the Brothers to openly conduct the activities for which they had been persecuted in their home countries. With little funds but plenty of enthusiasm, they published magazines, organized lectures, and carried out all sorts of activities through which they could spread their ideology. Their activism soon attracted other Muslim students and small numbers of Muslim immigrant laborers who had not had contact with the Brotherhood in their home countries.

It is important to point out that the arrival of the first Brothers to Europe and North America was hardly the first phase of a concerted and arcane plot of the Muslim Brotherhood to Islamize the West, as it is sometimes portrayed. They initially represented a small, disperse contingent of militants whose move reflected not a centralized plan, but rather personal decisions that fortuitously brought some Brotherhood figures to spend some years or the rest of their lives in the West. The small organisations they spontaneously formed soon developed beyond their most optimistic expectations. The Brothers' student groupings evolved into organisations seeking to fulfil the religious needs of the West's rapidly growing Muslim populations and their mosques—often structured as multi-purpose community centres—attracted large numbers of worshippers. Following al Banna's organisational model, they established youth and women's branches, schools, and think tanks.

By the late 1970s, the Brothers' isolated clusters throughout the West increasingly began to interact with one another, establishing formal and informal networks that spanned Europe and North America. Yet, because most of the pioneers' hearts were still in their native countries, they viewed their sojourn in the West as only a temporary exile in a convenient sanctuary before returning home to continue their struggle to establish an Islamic state.

Nevertheless, some Brotherhood activists slowly started to perceive their situation differently. Redefining some centuries-old religious qualifications, they increasingly stated that the traditional distinction between *dar al Islam* (land of Islam) and *dar al harb* (land of war) did not reflect the current reality.[6] While the West could not be considered *dar al Islam*, because *sharia* was not enforced there, it could not be considered *dar al harb* either, because Muslims were allowed to practice Islam freely and were not persecuted. The scholars decided, therefore, that it was possible for them to create a new legal category. They concluded that the West should be considered *dar al dawa* (land of preaching), a territory where Muslims live as a minori-

6. Muslim scholars have traditionally debated the two concepts, often developing subcategories and diverging opinions. See for example: Khaled Abou El Fadl, "Striking a Balance: Islamic Legal Discourse on Muslim Minorities," in *Muslims on the Americanization Path?*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

ty, are respected, and have the affirmative duty to spread their religion peacefully.[7]

The implications of this decision go far beyond the realm of theology. By redefining the nature of the Muslim presence in the West, the Brothers also changed the nature of their own role within it. While still supporting in words and deeds their counterparts' efforts to establish Islamic states in the Muslim world, they increasingly focused their attention on their new reality in the West. Having redrawn the West as *dar al dawa*, in fact, they intensified their efforts at spreading their interpretation of Islam in it.

Moreover, in many countries the Western Brothers have positioned themselves as the main interlocutors between Western institutions and local Muslim communities. Although circumstances vary from country to country, when today's Western governments or media outlets attempt to "reach out to the Muslim community", it is quite likely that many (if not all) of the organisations and individuals they contact are part of the network of the Western Muslim Brotherhood, with varying degrees of commitment and intensity. While there are notable exceptions, and the situation has changed in several countries over the past few decades, overall, it is apparent that no other Islamic movement has the visibility, political influence, and access to Western elites that the Western Brothers have obtained over the last twenty years. In light of these facts, it is fair to portray the competition for the representation of Western Muslims as the relative victory of a well-organized minority over other, less organized minorities for the voice of a silent majority.

I.III Three Categories of the Brotherhood in the West

One of the most challenging aspects of the Muslim Brotherhood's activities in the West is identifying which organisations and individuals can be linked to the movement. Most Western-based, Brotherhood-linked activists have traditionally gone to great lengths to downplay or hide ties to the Brotherhood, as they are aware of the negative stigma that perceived links to the organisation carry in Western countries. Governments and commentators have endlessly debated whether the organisations founded by the Brotherhood's pioneers and their offshoots—established decades ago and increasingly guided by a second generation of mostly Western-born leaders—can still be described as Muslim Brotherhood entities.

The answer can be given only after refining the question. If the identification with the Brotherhood is defined by a formal membership or affiliation, then the Brotherhood has only a limited presence in the West. Most Middle Eastern branches of the Brotherhood have created a presence in the West that mirrors their *modus operandi* in the countries of origin, albeit on a much smaller scale. They possess a rigid leadership structure, a recruitment process culminating in a swearing in ceremony, and strict rules for affiliates—all replicating the rules and practices employed in the countries of origin. These dynamics are kept secret by the Brotherhood in the West, as it has been done for decades in the Middle East in order to survive the sometimes ruthless persecution of local regimes. It is therefore impossible to say how many individuals in each European country belong to the formal structure. It is nonetheless fair to state that it is a small number of individuals, possibly in the hundreds in larger countries and in the dozens in smaller ones.

7. Wasif Shadid and Sjoerd van Koningsveld, "Loyalty to a non-Muslim Government," in *Political Participation and Identities of Muslims in Non-Muslim States*, ed. W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Konignsveld (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996); Xavier Ternisien, *Les Frères Musulmans* (Paris: Fayard, 2005), 190-192, 198-9, 1.2.

However, if identification with the Brotherhood can solely be determined by adherence to a set of ideas and methods, and not necessarily a formal affiliation, then the Brotherhood has a much broader presence in Europe and North America. The Brotherhood today is a global ideological movement in which like-minded individuals interact through an informal yet highly sophisticated international network connected by personal, financial, and, most importantly, ideological ties. The idea of creating a global movement rather than a formally structured organisation has been present since the early days of the Brotherhood. Al Banna himself had stated that he saw the Brotherhood not as a political party but rather "as an idea and a creed, a system and a syllabus, which is why we are not bounded by a place or a group of people and can never be until the Day of Judgment."[8]

Terminology can be deceiving. As previously noted, most individuals and organisations, particularly in the West (including some examples from Austria), will publicly reject any "formal" or "organic" link to the Brotherhood. In so doing, they are, strictly speaking, telling the truth; however they are also playing with words. Senior members of the Brotherhood have repeatedly clarified that the Brotherhood is not a structured organisation of card-carrying members, but rather an ideological movement that transcends formal affiliation. Membership comes by adopting certain ideas and methods, not (only) by swearing allegiance or inserting one's name in a secret registry.

In an interview with Xavier Ternisien, a French expert on religions, Mohammed Akef clearly described how the Brotherhood transcends formalities such as official affiliation.[9] "We do not have an international organisation; we have an organisation through our perception of things," explained the *murshid*. "We are present in every country. Everywhere there are people who believe in the message of the Muslim Brothers. In France, the Union of Islamic Organisations of France (UOIF) does not belong to the organisation of the Brothers. They follow their own laws and rules. There are many organisations that do not belong to the Muslim Brothers. For example, Sheikh [Yussuf] al Qaradawi. He is not a Muslim Brother, but he was formed according to the doctrine of the Brothers. The doctrine of the Brothers is a written doctrine that has been translated in all languages." Confirming the informality of the movement's ties, Akef elsewhere referred to the UOIF as "our brothers in France."[10] Finally, in a 2005 interview, Akef explained that European Ikhwan organisations have no direct link to the Egyptian branch, yet they coordinate actions with them. He concluded the interview with a telling remark: "We have the tendency not to make distinctions among us."[11]

Given the lack of formal affiliation, and a conscious effort by the Western Brothers to downplay or even deny their ideological links to the Muslim Brotherhood, identifying an organisation as "part of the movement" is a real challenge. Nevertheless, there are a number of indicators that, while not conclusive, help efforts to assess whether a certain organisation belongs to the global Muslim Brotherhood movement. These include the history of the organisation (and the links to the Brotherhood of its founders and main activists); its adoption of Brotherhood texts and literature; financial ties with other Brotherhood structures and funders; and formal or informal participation in transnational Brotherhood initiatives and organisations, such as the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE) and the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO).

8. Cited in Hillel Fradkin, "The History and Unwritten Future of Salafism," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* (November 2007).
9. Ternisien, 110-111.
10. Mohammed Akef, interview by Alwihdah website, January 2004. http://www.alwihdah.com/view.asp?cat=3&id=50
11. Sylvain Besson, "La Conquete de L'Occident: Le Projet Secret Des Islamistes" (Paris: Seuil), 2005. p.100.

Based on this more nuanced view, it can be argued that organisations and individuals operating in the West can be referred to as "Muslim Brotherhood" by falling under three descriptive categories. In decreasing degrees of intensity, these are:

1. The Pure Brothers

These are the members of various branches of the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the Middle East (as demonstrated later in this report, most Pure Brothers in Austria are members of either the Egyptian, Syrian, or Palestinian branches of the Brotherhood) who over the last fifty years have established a presence in Europe. "Pure Brothers" are inserted in a formal structure, with a well-defined leadership and rules. Most of their work is aimed at supporting the activities of the mother organisations in their home countries, even though some are also actively involved in initiatives more closely related to the European country in which they reside or have a global reach. Some of them openly and proudly admit their affiliation to the Brotherhood, while others actively deny it.

2. Brotherhood Spawns

Brotherhood spawns are organisations established by individuals with strong personal ties to the Brotherhood, but which operate completely independently from any Brotherhood structure and, in many cases, transcend the national affiliations of the "Pure Brothers" Their ideology is still close to the Brotherhood's, even though some might have moved away from a literalist interpretation of al Banna's texts in order to adapt them to a Western setting. They tend to belong to formal and informal transnational structures linked to the Brotherhood.

3. Organizations Influenced by the Brotherhood

These are organisations founded by individuals with some ties to the Brotherhood that have somewhat dwelled in ideological surroundings that are very close to the movement, but have no clear organisational ties to it.

I.IV The Brotherhood's Ideology in the West

Since reinterpreting their role in the West in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Western Brotherhood networks have understood the need to adapt their rich intellectual heritage to their new environment. Over the last thirty years, the Western Brothers have tried to find ways to contextualize the teachings of their ideological forefathers to new surroundings where they could operate freely in non-Muslim societies. The Brotherhood is well-known for its pragmatism, and it soon became clear that blindly applying al Banna and Mawdudi's prescriptions from 1930s Egypt and India made little sense in modern Europe and North America. Certainly, the ideas of these ideologues and the other leading thinkers that came after them still provide invaluable guidance on several aspects of their faith and activism, starting with the immutable idea of Islam as a comprehensive way of life and a full methodology.[12] Nevertheless, they can be discussed, reinterpreted, adapted, challenged, and even dismissed as times, places, and circumstances change. The Brotherhood, in the West as elsewhere in the world, is not a stagnant movement, but rather, makes flexibility and continuous evolution two of its core characteristics and strengths.

As previously stated, the Muslim Brotherhood worldwide is far from monolithic, and especially in the West, divisions between individuals, organisations, and branches are common. There is no

12. Kamal Helbawy, interview by Lorenzo Vidino, December 2008, London; Lhaj Thami Breze (President of UOIF), interview by Lorenzo Vidino, May 2009, La Courneuve.

consensus among Western Brothers on the organisations goals and how to achieve them. Issues such as the First Gulf War or the hijab controversy in France have spurred strong internal debates, which in some cases have degenerated into personal feuds.

Despite these differences, it is nevertheless possible to identify some goals that are common to all "members" of the Western Brotherhood. Foremost among them is the preservation of an Islamic identity among Western Muslims. In a similar fashion to any other religiously conservative movement, Islamists worldwide are concerned with maintaining the morality and piousness of their communities. This defensive posture becomes even more important in reference to Muslim minorities, as they incur the risk of being culturally absorbed by the host society. "It is the duty of the Islamic Movement," wrote Yussuf al Qaradawi, the undisputed spiritual leader of the global and Western Brotherhood, "not to leave these expatriates to be swept by the whirlpool of the materialistic trend that prevails in the West."[13]

Yet, unlike Salafists and other Islamist movements that seek to strengthen the Islamic identity of Western Muslims, the Brothers do not advocate isolation from mainstream society. To the contrary, they urge Muslims to actively participate in it, but with the explicit end goal of changing society in an Islamic fashion. According to al Qaradawi, Muslims in the West should adopt "a conservatism without isolation, and an openness without melting."[14] Finding the balance between cultural impermeability and active socio-political interaction is not easy, but the Brothers see themselves as capable of defining how Muslims can be both loyal to their faith and active citizens of European secular democracies.

The Brothers see this guiding role as an unprecedented opportunity for the movement, which, in the words of al Qaradawi, can "play the role of the missing leadership of the Muslim nation with all its trends and groups."[15] While in Muslim-majority countries, the Brotherhood is kept in check by regimes that oppose it and therefore can exercise only limited influence, al Qaradawi realizes that no such obstacle prevents it from operating in the free and democratic West. Moreover, the masses of Muslim expatriates, disoriented by the impact of life in non-Muslim societies and often lacking the most basic knowledge about Islam, represent an ideally receptive audience for the movement's message. Finally, no competing Islamic trend has the financial means and organisation to compete with the Western Brothers. The combination of these factors leads al Qaradawi to conclude that the West is a sort of Islamic *tabula rasa*, a virgin territory where the socio-religious structures and limits of the Muslim world do not exist and where the Brothers can implement their *dawa* freely, overcoming their competition with their superior mobilization skills and funds.

A second goal common to all Western Brotherhood organisations is their designation as official or *de facto* representatives of the Muslim community of their country. Becoming the preferred—if not the exclusive—partners of Western governments and elites serves various purposes. One, publicly and proudly declared by the Brothers, is to positively contribute to the future of Western society. Highlighting common values, the Brothers present themselves as a moderate force encouraging Muslims to simultaneously participate in society and spread their Islamic principles, which, ultimately, benefit everybody. They can, unlike competing Islamist movements, lead the Muslim community on

13. Yusuf al Qaradawi, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*. (Swansea, UK: Awakening Publications, 2000), 7.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.

the path of integration while simultaneously contributing to a moral revival of the rest of society.[16]

Yet, the Western Brothers seem to have additional purposes attached to the establishment of a preferential relationship between them and Western governments. Despite their unrelenting activism and ample resources, the Brothers have not been able to create a mass movement and attract the allegiance of large numbers of Western Muslims. While concepts, issues, and frames introduced by the Brothers have reached many of them, most Western Muslims either actively resist the Brothers' influence or simply ignore it. The Brothers understand that a preferential relationship with Western elites could provide them with the financial and political capital that would allow them to significantly expand their reach and influence inside the community.

By leveraging such a relationship, in fact, the Brothers aim at being entrusted by Western governments with administering all aspects of Muslim life in each country. They would ideally become those whom governments task with preparing the curricula and selecting the teachers for Islamic education in public schools, appointing imams in public institutions such as the military, the police or in prison, and receiving subsidies to administer various social services. This position would also allow them to be the de facto official Muslim voice in public debates and in the media, overshadowing competing forces. The powers and legitimacy bestowed upon them by Western governments would allow them to exert significantly increased influence over the Muslim community. Making a clever political calculation, the Western Brothers are attempting to turn their leadership bid into a self-fulfilling prophecy, seeking to be recognized as representatives of the Muslim community in order to actually become it.

Finally, the position of representatives of Western Muslims would allow the Brothers to influence Western policymaking on all Islamic-related issues. While having their say in the crafting of domestic policies can be very important, the Western Brothers seem to have placed an even higher premium on influencing foreign policies. Once again, the writings of Yussuf al Qaradawi perfectly encapsulates this vision. Understanding the crucial role that the policies of Western governments play in the struggle between Islamist movements and their rivals for the control of Muslim countries, al Qaradawi declares that "it is necessary for Islam in this age to have a presence in such societies that affect world politics" and that the presence of a strong and organized Islamist movement in the West is "required for defending the causes of the Muslim Nation and the Muslim Land against the antagonism and misinformation of anti-Islamic forces and trends."[17]

In other words, al Qaradawi argues that the Western Brothers find themselves with the unprecedented opportunity to influence Western public opinion and policymakers on all geopolitical issues related to the Muslim world. And indeed, over the last twenty years, the European Brothers have consistently tried to take advantage of their position of influence to advance Islamist causes. From private meetings with senior policymakers to mass street protests, from editorials in major newspapers to high profile conferences, they have used all the material and intellectual resources they possess in order to advance the Islamist point of view on several issues, from Palestine to Afghanistan, and on the nature of the Islamist movement itself.

16. For an overview of what, according to the Brotherhood, Muslims can contribute to the West, see, for example, Kamal el-Helbawy, "Cementing Relations between Muslim Citizens and Governments in the West: The United Kingdom as a Case Study," Islamism Digest, Volume 3, Issue 9, September 2008.
17. al Qaradawi, *Priorities*.

I.V Assessing the Brotherhood in the West

Assessments of the Western Brothers closely resemble those of the global Islamist movement, with analysts split between optimists and pessimists. More specifically, optimists argue that the Western Brothers are no longer preoccupied with creating Islamic states in the Muslim world, but rather focus on social and political issues concerning Muslims in the West.[18] Their main goals are simply to defend the interests of Western Muslims and to diffuse Islamic values among them. The Western Brothers are a socially conservative force that, unlike other movements with which they are often mistakenly grouped, encourages the integration of Western Muslim communities and offers a model in which Muslims can live their faith fully and maintain a strong Islamic identity while becoming actively engaged citizens.[19] Moreover, the optimists argue that the Western Brothers provide young Muslims with positive affirmation, urging them to convey their energy and frustration into the political process rather than into violence or extremism. Governments should harness the Western Brothers' grassroots activities and cooperate with them on common issues, such as unemployment, crime, drugs, and radicalisation.

Pessimists see a much more sinister nature in the Western Brotherhood. Thanks to their resources and the naiveté of most Westerners, they argue, the Western Brothers are engaged in a slow but steady social engineering program, aimed at Islamizing Western Muslim populations and ultimately at competing with Western governments for their allegiance. The pessimists accuse the Brothers of being modern-day Trojan horses, engaged in a sort of stealth subversion designed to weaken Western society from within, patiently laying the foundations for its replacement with an Islamic order.[20] The fact that the Western Brothers do not use violence but participate with enthusiasm in the democratic process is seen simply as a cold calculation on their part. Realizing they are still a relatively weak force, the Brothers have opted for a different tactic: befriending the establishment.

According to pessimists, officials of Brotherhood-linked organisations have understood that infiltrating the system rather than attacking it head-on is the best way to obtain what they want; after all, in today's Western societies, the harsh confrontations mounted by jihadist groups such as the Islamic State lead nowhere. Western Brothers have astutely realized that their most fruitful approach is to cozy up to Western elites and gain their trust. By becoming the privileged partners of the Western establishment, they can gain significant power that will help them further their goals. They are taking advantage of Western elites' desperate desire to establish a dialogue with any representatives of the Muslim community and putting themselves forward as the voices of Western Muslims, then using the power and legitimacy that comes from these interactions to strengthen their position inside the community. Pessimists also point to a constant discrepancy between the Western Brothers' internal and external discourses as a sign of their duplicitous nature. In the media and in dialogues with Western governments, Brotherhood leaders publicly avow the group's dedication to integration and democracy, tailoring their rhetoric to what they know

18. See for example: Alexandre Caeiro and Mahmoud al-Saify, "Qaradawi in Europe, Europe in Qaradawi? The Global Mufti's European Politics," in *The Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf Al-Qaradawi* ed. Bettina Gräf and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 111, 116, 117.
19. Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 94-98.
20. The expression is used, for example, by the British MP Michael Gove in his book *Celsius 7/7* (London: Phoenix, 2006), 84-113.

their interlocutors want to hear.[21] Yet, speaking Arabic or Turkish before fellow Muslims, they often drop the veneer and foster an "us versus them" mentality that is the antithesis of integration and tolerance. Even as Brotherhood representatives speak about interfaith dialogue and integration on television, the movement's mosques preach hate and warn worshippers about the evils of Western society.

I.VI The 2014 British Government's Review of the Brotherhood

Opinions on the Brotherhood swing dramatically not just within the academic community but also within virtually every Western government. In what was possibly the first attempt ever made in a Western country to assess the operations of and determine policy options towards the Muslim Brotherhood, in 2014 then British Prime Minister David Cameron ordered a government-wide review of "the philosophy, activities, impact and influence on UK national interests, at home and abroad, of the Muslim Brotherhood and of government policy towards the organisation."[22] The process entailed pulling together knowledge from a variety of entities within government, from the Foreign Office to the intelligence agencies, from the Charity Commission to the Department of Education.

The process went on for months with a plethora of controversies and difficulties. In December 2015, the British government published an executive summary of the Review's findings.[23] In one of its key sections, it argues:

> *[T]he Muslim Brotherhood have been publicly committed to political engagement in this country. Engagement with Government has at times been facilitated by what appeared to be a common agenda against al Qaida and (at least in the UK) militant salafism. But this engagement did not take account of Muslim Brotherhood support for a proscribed terrorist group and its views about terrorism which, in reality, were quite different from our own; aspects of Muslim Brotherhood ideology and tactics, in this country and overseas, are contrary to our values and have been contrary to our national interests and our national security.*

Moreover:

> *[T]he Muslim Brotherhood historically focused on remodelling individuals and communities through grassroots activism. They have engaged politically where possible. But they have also selectively used violence and sometimes terror in pursuit of their institutional goals. Their public narrative – notably in the West - emphasised engagement not violence. But there have been significant differences between Muslim Brotherhood communications in English and Arabic.*

The assessment of the British Review, as demonstrated by this report, is similar to that of most continental European intelligence agencies.

---

21. Antoine Sfeir, *Les Réseaux d'Allah: Les Filières Islamistes en France et en Europe* (Paris: Plon, 2001), 51.
22. Prime Minister's Office, "Government Review of the Muslim Brotherhood", 2014. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-review-of-the-muslim-brotherhood.
23. "Muslim Brotherhood Review: Main Findings," House of Commons, December 17, 2015.

SECTION II

The Muslim Brotherhood in Austria

II.I The Pioneers

The presence of Muslim Brotherhood networks in Austria dates back to the 1960s, when prominent members of the Egyptian branch of the movement escaped Gamal Abd al-Nasser's repression on the organisation by fleeing to the country.[24] The most prominent members in Austria were Ahmed Elkadi (who would later play a crucial role in establishing a Brotherhood presence in the United States)[25] and Yussuf Nada.

The scion of a wealthy family from Alexandria, Nada joined the Brotherhood as a teenager and at the age of 23, was among the thousands of *Ikhwan* imprisoned by Nasser. After two years in prison Nada left Egypt, never to live there again. After barely escaping the 1969 *coup d'état* in Libya, Nada settled in Austria, where he set up a profitable dairy business. While building a multimillion-dollar financial empire between the Middle East and Europe, Nada remained involved in the vicissitudes of the Brotherhood. In the 1970s, the *murshid* Omar Tilmisani assigned him the role of head of the Brotherhood's external relations.[26] Using the high-profile connections made through his business activities and his Italian passport to travel without restrictions, Nada shuttled across the world to represent the Brotherhood's interests in meeting with many of the Muslim world's leaders, from leaders of Islamic movements to heads of state. Nada's gigantic mansion in Campione d'Italia, an upscale Italian enclave in Swiss territory, has been described by many, including Nada himself, as a sort of unofficial foreign ministry of the Brotherhood.[27] Nada's skills as a businessman led him to play a key role in the financial aspects of the Brotherhood's establishment in the West.

Nada spent only limited time in Austria, but enough to set up the embryo of a Brotherhood presence in the country and to establish a link that would prove crucial for the development of the Brotherhood in Austria decades later—the one with the Brotherhood cluster in Munich.[28] Since the late 1950s, the Bavarian city had attracted a small cadre of Egyptian Brotherhood activists led by Said Ramadan, Hassan al Banna's personal secretary and son-in-law. Ramadan was one of the first and arguably the most prominent among the Brotherhood's pioneers in Europe, creating a network of mosques and entities linked to the movement. One such network developed in Munich, where a group of Arab students contacted Rama-

24. See Annette Ranko, *The Muslim Brotherhood and its Quest for Hegemony in Egypt: State-Discourse and Islamist Counter-Discourse* (Springer VS, Hamburg: 2012), 43-73; Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (Columbia University Press, New York: 2010), 27-31; Youssef Nada and Douglas Thompson, *Inside the Muslim Brotherhood* (Metro Publishing, London: 2012).
25. Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah, Sam Roe and Laurie Cohen, "A Rare Look at Secretive Brotherhood in America," *Chicago Tribune*, September 19, 2004.
26. Extensive interviews with Nada about his life have been published by the Egyptian *al Misri al Yawm* (May 25 to May 30, 2008) and *al Jazeera* ("Century Witness," August 4th, 2002 to September 29th, 2002).
27. Ibid.
28. Ian Johnson, *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA, and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Mariner Books, Boston: 2011), 189-190; Petra Ramsauer, *Muslimrübder: Ihre geheime Strategie ihr glabales Netzwerk* (Molden Verlag, Vienna: 2014), 177-183.

dan seeking his help in constructing a mosque.[29] The Mosque Construction Commission, the body raising funds for the new structure, had become the focus of a struggle between the Arab students and a group of Muslims who had stayed in Munich after fighting alongside the Nazis in World War II.[30] Originally from Central Asia and the Caucasus, the ex-soldiers embraced an interpretation of Islam that clashed with the more militant views of the Arabs. By 1960, Ramadan, thanks to his Saudi funding, secured his position as Chairman of the commission; when the mosque was completed in 1973, the Brotherhood, thanks to its finances, determination, and organisation, had completely eclipsed other influences over the mosque.[31]

The Brotherhood-dominated Mosque Construction Commission became a permanent organisation, which later changed its name to Islamic Society of Germany (Islamische Gemeinschaft Deutschland, IGD). Ramadan headed the organisation for ten years, ceding the stewardship to Pakistani national Fazal Yazdani, one of the students who had originally contacted Ramadan. Following Yazdani, Syrian-born Ghaleb Himmat took the helm of IGD. Soon, Munich became yet another sanctuary for the Brotherhood in Europe. Particularly during Ramadan and other Islamic holidays, the mosque would become a locus for Brotherhood members and sympathizers throughout Europe. Indeed, three of the seven *murshid* (guides) of the Egyptian Brotherhood have spent significant time in the German city.[32] In fact, it was in Munich that Himmat met Yussuf Nada, which marked the start of a political and financial symbiosis between the two men that lasted for more than 40 years and shaped the development of the *Ikhwan* in the West.[33]

While Elkadi and Nada created the first cluster of Egyptian Brothers in Austria, over time, other prominent Egyptian Brotherhood members also spent time in Austria. One such member is Ahmed Mahmoud El Abiary, a long-time Vienna resident and Austrian citizen. El Abiary currently lives in London, where he serves as one of the most senior members of what is traditionally been the headquarters outside of Egypt of the Egyptian Brotherhood (a role that grew even more important after the overthrow of Mohammed Mursi). His crucial role in the London cluster of the Brotherhood is confirmed not only by personal interviews conducted by the author with other senior Brotherhood leaders, but also by corporate records revealing El Abiary's direct involvement in various Brotherhood companies registered at London's Brotherhood official headquarters (he is listed as director of Nile Valley Trust and Alamat Media Services, both registered at 113 Cricklewood Broadway, London).

British corporate records reveal more curious Austrian links. One of El Abiary's sons, Abdulrahman (also an Austrian citizen) is registered as a director of Alamat Media Services. The records for the Nile Valley Trust list as a director a woman with Austrian links named Eid Khalifa. Khalifa is the widow of Abdulaziz Khalifa, a long-time Vienna-based Egyptian Brotherhood member and friend of Yus-

29. The history of the Munich mosque, central to an understanding of the early days of the Brotherhood in Europe, is being told in two forthcoming books written by Stefan Meining and Ian Johnson. I thank both of them for allowing me to see the extensive documentation they have obtained from German public archives.
30. Ian Johnson, "The Beachhead: How a Mosque for Ex-Nazis Became Center of Radical Islam," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 12, 2005; Zwischen Halbmond und Hakenkreuz, *ARD* Documentary, July 19, 2006.
31. Filing of the Moscheebau Kommission, Munich Amtsgericht, March 29, 1960; Filings of the Islamische Gemenischaft in Deutschland from 1973 to 2002, Munich Amtsgericht; Interview with Bavarian Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz officials, May 2009, Munich; Interview with Stefan Meining, May 2009, Munich; Interview with Ian Johnson, November 2008, Berlin.
32. Interview with Bavarian Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz officials, May 2009, Munich; Interview with Stefan Meining, May 2009, Munich.
33. Yussuf Nada, interview by Lorenzo Vidino, July 2008, Campione d'Italia.

suf Nada. Austrian corporate records show that Eid Khalifa and some of her relatives are officers in other Vienna-based companies.

Some of Eid Khalifa's and her late husband's connections highlight some interesting links. Nada's personal phone book, which was seized by Swiss authorities during a raid on his home in 2001, has an entry for "Abdelaziz Khalifa, Vienna" with the numbers 00431 4705858, 4705866 and 4402729. The first phone number is also the contact number for the Liga Kultur Verein in a document published by the FIOE, the pan-European umbrella organisation for Brotherhood-influenced entities. The Liga Kultur Verein, as it will be shown later, is one of the main Brotherhood-linked organisations in Austria.

While El Abiary and Khalifa were Vienna-based, the most important cluster of Egyptian Brothers has traditionally been based out of Graz. Arguably, the most prominent Egyptian Brother to reside in Graz in recent years is Ayman Ali. Ali's career in the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as his activities in Austria and around the world, have been detailed in an extensive legal case which made its way all the way to the federal appeals court. During the case, Ali and his family battled with the Austrian government to obtain Austrian citizenship. The documents stemming from the case are interesting not only because they outline the activities of Ali and various entities associated with the Muslim Brotherhood milieu in Austria, but also because they include the assessment by the Austrian security establishment of said milieu.[34]

Ali was born in Cairo in 1966 and studied medicine in the Egyptian capital. During the Bosnian War, Ali was active in humanitarian work, acting as director of the Albania-based Taibah International Aid Agency. In 2004, however, Taibah's branch in Bosnia was designated as a terrorist organisation by the U.S. government; concurrently local authorities in Albania raided and then shut the local branch. A German police report related to the investigation stated that "the constellation of accounts, money flows and persons indicate that the accounts in Germany of Ibrahim El-Zayat [of which later] and Ayman Sayed Ahmed Aly were used for carrying out fundamentalist Islamic activities in Europe."[35]

After leaving Albania, Ali and his family settled in Bonn, Germany and later in Graz, where he bought a house and became an imam at the al Nur mosque (the main mosque of the Liga Kultur Verein and the hub of the local Egyptian scene). He also set up a company, SAGT General Trading GmbH, which was officially engaged in importing and exporting wood and metals. However, Austrian authorities suspected that the company was simply a front used to circumvent Austrian immigration (as he obtained his Austrian visa by working as an employee for it) and money laundering laws (accusations his wife, who was the company's general manager, denied during the trial).[36] While his wife led study groups for women, his children were involved in various activities of local organisations of the Brotherhood milieu. Ali's involvement in the Austrian scene did not preclude him from operating internationally. He came to serve as deputy Secretary General of FIOE, the Western Brotherhood pan-European umbrella organisation, and was particularly active in expanding FIOE's activities in Eastern Europe.

34. Landesverwaltungsgericht Steiermark, cases LVwG 70.8-3597/2015-34, LVwG 41.8-37/2016-34 and LVwG 41.8-39/2016-34, Graz, September 9, 2016.
35. Ian Johnson, "How Islamic Group's Ties Reveal Europe's Challenge A Conduit to Mainstream, Muslim Lobbyist Also Has Some Fundamentalist Links," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 2005. http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB113582317237133576.
36. Landesverwaltungsgericht Steiermark, cases LVwG 70.8-3597/2015-34, LVwG 41.8-37/2016-34 and LVwG 41.8-39/2016-34, Graz, September 9, 2016. Page 11.

Ali's position as one of the most experienced and high-ranking activists of both the Austrian and European Brotherhood networks came to an abrupt end in 2012. In that year, the Egyptian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood achieved various electoral successes, which led many European-based Egyptian Brotherhood activists to return to their country of origin. In a clear demonstration of his prominent status within the Egyptian Brotherhood, which he maintained even during his time away from Egypt, Ali obtained the position of senior advisor to newly elected president Mohammed Mursi. Ali's service in this role ended in the summer of 2013, with the overthrow of the Mursi government and Ali's subsequent arrest.[37]

Austria's importance in the European network of the Egyptian Brotherhood in its earlier days is confirmed by the fact that during the 1970s and 1980s, the organisation's main magazine in the West *al-Da'wa fi-Uruba* (Predication in Europe), was published in Vienna.[38] The Egyptian branch, however, was not the only national branch with a large presence in Austria—the Syrian Brotherhood has also extensively operated inside the country. Since the 1970s, several Syrian Brotherhood activists have settled in the capital and established a wide range of organisations and businesses.

Unlike the Egyptians, who mostly settled in Graz and largely focused on Egyptian or international activities instead of the situation in Austria, the Syrian Brothers established their centre of gravity in Vienna and built solid connections with Austrian elites, becoming trusted partners in various initiatives related to the management of Islam in the country. In so doing, they took advantage of the fact that Austria has long recognized Islam as an official religion and its legal system allows for various forms of partnership between the state and religious communities.

Anas Schakfeh is arguably the pioneer of the Syrian Brotherhood in Austria. Schakfeh's first foray into Austrian Muslim organisations was with the Moslemischer Sozialdienst (MSD), an organisation started in the early 1960s by Ghaleb Himmat, the Syrian Brotherhood activist who led the IGD in Munich and later became Nada's business partner.[39] In 1968, Schakfeh also co-founded the Moslemische Studentenunion (MSU), of which he became Secretary General and later President.[40] The MSD and the MSU represent some of the first Muslim organisations in Austria, and highlight the Syrian Brothers' tendency in Austria to play a double role. Not only did they actively support their brethren in their country of origin, like the Egyptian Brothers, but also attempted to shape and represent the nascent Muslim community in their adoptive country.

Historically, the Egyptians and Syrians have been the most active Brotherhood branches in Austria; however, the country has seen the presence of activists from other national branches of the movement. For example, several individuals linked more or less directly to Hamas, the official Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, have long called Austria their home.

Brotherhood pioneers from many separate branches have used Austria as a convenient base of operation. Shielded from the harsh persecution they faced in their home countries, they replicated some

37. "Egypt: Morsy Aides Moved From Secret Detention," *Human Rights Watch*, December 25, 2013. http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/12/25/egypt-morsy-aides-moved-secret-detention.
38. The address given is Al Da'wa A 1170 P.O.Box 69, Vienna.
39. Ernst Fürlinger, *Moscheebaukonflikte in Österreich: Nationale Politik des religiösen Raums im globalen Zeitalter* (Vienna University Press, Vienna: 2013), 140-146; Peter Heine and Aslam Syed (eds), *Muslimische Philanthropie und Bürgerschaftliches Engagement* (Maecenata Verlag, Berlin: 2005), 219-220.
40. Farid Hafez, *Anas Schafkeh. Das österreichische Gesicht des Islams* (Braumüller, Vienna: 2012), 26-28.

of the traditional Brotherhood structures (such as the "usra," or family, the base unit of the Brotherhood), recruited new members, and provided various forms of political, financial, and material support to the mother organisation in their countries of origin. Some of them, also expanded their focus to various Islam-related activities in Austria or in Europe. Some of their activities were public, others were kept secret. In some cases, they openly identified themselves as being members of the Brotherhood, in others they hid and denied it. Each branch tends to operate separately, but as time passes, distinctions based on countries of origin are slowly evaporating. Certain issues and activities bring together all Austria-based Brotherhood activists, irrespective of their countries of their countries of origin. That is the case, for example, with the many pro-Palestine initiatives and, more recently, with the efforts to oppose the overthrow of the Mursi regime (for example, the Koordinierungsrat der Agyptischen Gemeinde in Österreich—KAGÖ—tends to unite Brothers of different origins).

These dynamics are not unique to Austria, as many Western European countries have witnessed the settlement of Brotherhood activists, albeit with varying intensities and trajectories. But Austria unquestionably represents one of the European countries where, according to Brotherhood members themselves, the Brothers felt they found a particularly favorable environment.[41] Several overlapping elements contribute to this assessment. First, the country has an enduring tradition of generous asylum policies, which it has granted to members of various branches of the Brotherhood fleeing persecution in their countries of origin. Second, Austrian authorities have traditionally adopted a *laissez-faire* policy when it comes to foreign extremist organisations, allowing them to conduct their activities virtually undisturbed unless they pose a direct security threat to Austria (which the Brotherhood arguably does not pose).

Additional elements contribute to Austria being a "favourite destination" for Muslim Brotherhood activists. One is the country's strategic position in the heart of Europe, making it a perfect middle point between the East and the West. Austria is a tolerant and open country, its cities are multicultural, and it is business-friendly; these factors have allowed the growth of a Middle Eastern business community that includes Brotherhood members or individuals to whom they are close. Finally, the fact that Brotherhood activists have gradually developed close connections to some Austrian political forces and institutions is an important factor in explaining why the movement has historically felt so comfortable in the country.

II.II Brotherhood Spawns

The "Brotherhood pioneers" described in the previous sections constituted a small cluster of like-minded individuals who, while maintaining divisions based on national origin, continued to interact with one another and established the clearest examples of the Brotherhood's presence in Austria. They cemented bonds among themselves through marriages, joint financial ventures, and membership in a variety of organisations and initiatives. These pioneers planted the cornerstones of an organized Muslim presence in Austria.

It is relatively unproblematic and straightforward to identify individuals like Yussuf Nada or Ayman Ali as "Muslim Brotherhood," it is significantly more complicated to apply the same label to some of the organisations directly or indirectly created by these pioneers. As it was explained in the previous section, when discussing dynamics throughout Europe with a formalistic approach, it is fair to say such organisations are not "part of the Muslim Brotherhood." While each case should be assessed individually, they do not tend to be technically in-

41. Interview with Brotherhood leaders, August 2016, London.

serted in the formal, compartmentalized structure of any national branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Yet, as has been shown, the term Muslim Brotherhood also encompasses a global ideological movement that transcends formal affiliations—though ties are certainly important. In every Western country, in substance, the Brotherhood is essentially a relatively small, informal network of activists tied together by their presence in overlapping organisations and initiatives, business ties, old friendships, marriages, and, most importantly, a common vision. An organisation's consistent and protracted involvement in an ever-evolving social network, one that transcends both borders and linguistic barriers, is a compelling indicator of its affiliation to the global Brotherhood network.

In the Austrian setting, the Liga Kultur Verein (al-Majma' al-islami al-thaqafi — Nimsa) serves as the perfect example of an organisation that, despite not being "pure Brotherhood," arguably belongs to the second category identified in the general scheme of what can be considered Brotherhood, the "Brotherhood spawns."[42] Founded in 1998, it has two main branches in Vienna and in Graz.[43] Austrian media, politicians, and commentators alike refer to it as "a Muslim Brotherhood organisation," as "close to the Muslim Brotherhood," or with other, similar connotations. In documents related to the Ali case, the Verfassungsschutz openly calls it "an organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood."[44]

Its leaders will often deny these charges, but in some cases they will nuance them. Graz-based Liga officer Kamel Mahmoud, for example, has stated that the Liga "only keeps the idea of the Muslim Brotherhood."[45] If the Liga is not a "pure Muslim Brotherhood" organisation, formally inserted into the structure of any national branch of the movement, it is also equally clear that the organisation has extensive personal, organisational, financial, and ideological ties to various global Muslim Brotherhood networks. Therefore, if the label "Muslim Brotherhood" is applied using the informal approach described above, the Liga is a quintessential Muslim Brotherhood spawn.

A first indication comes from the organisation's international ties, which are illustrative of the Liga's position within the global Muslim Brotherhood informal movement. Under the section "Partners," its website lists five international organisations.[46] One is the FIOE, the abovementioned pan-European umbrella organisation of Brotherhood-affiliated entities of which the Liga is a co-founder, and in which Ayman Ali served in various senior positions. Notably, in November 2014, the government of the United Arab Emirates designated the Muslim Association of Britain and the Swedish Islamiska Forbündet, two of FIOE's co-founders, as terrorist organisations. The Muslim Association of Britain and the Swedish Islamiska Forbündet are, in essence, counterparts to the Liga in their respective countries, being in substance both Brotherhood affiliated organisations. As seen in the previous section, the Liga used to display on FIOE materials the contact information of Abdelaziz Khalifa, a Vienna-based senior Egyptian Brotherhood member, as its own official contact information.

Moreover, the Liga's website lists two NGOs as partners: the World Assembly of Muslim Youth

42. Greiseneckergasse 10, 1200-Wien. For an overview about LKV, see "Islamische Liga der Kultur (LK)," http://www.islam-landkarte.at/sites/default/files/Liga%20der%20Kultur_0.pdf.
43. Historically the Syrians dominated in Vienna and the Egyptians in Graz but this distinction has gotten somewhat diluted with time.
44. Landesverwaltungsgericht Steiermark, cases LVwG 70.8-3597/2015-34, LVwG 41.8-37/2016-34 and LVwG 41.8-39/2016-34, Graz, September 9, 2016. Page 14.
45. Stefan Beig, "Unterwegs auf dem "Weg der Mitte," *Wiener Zeitung*, February 11, 2011. http://www.wienerzeitung.at/themen_channel/integration/gesellschaft/?em_cnt=224457
46. See the Liga Kultur website: http://www.ligakultur.at/#!partner/cd2v.

(WAMY) and Human Appeal International (HAI). WAMY is a Saudi Arabia-based organisation long deputized to spread the Saudi interpretation of Islam (widely known as Wahhabism) worldwide. According to its own material, its goal is to "arm the Muslim youth with full confidence in the supremacy of the Islamic system over other systems." It has a lengthy track record of cooperating with Muslim Brotherhood networks and has, at times, been accused of funding terrorist activities.[47] HAI is a charity based in the UK with several Islamist links and suspected involvement in terrorism financing in numerous countries. Recently leaked U.S. cables reveal the U.S. Department of State's suspicions that HAI financially supports organisations "associated with Hamas" and that "members of its field offices in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Chechnya had connections to al-Qaeda associates."[48] Both WAMY and HAI have been banned from conducting activities in Israel for being "part of Hamas's fundraising network."[49]

Another hint of the Liga's leanings comes from the guests regularly hosted by the Liga and its youth branch, the Jugend der Liga Kultur (JLK). Among the many Brotherhood leaders to have visited the Liga are Mohammed Saad al-Katatny, former Secretary General of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), and Mohammad al-Gawady, a former member of the Egyptian Parliament, also from the FJP. Particularly noteworthy is the 2014 lecture given at the Liga headquarters by Hesham Bargash, a member of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, the Islamic jurisprudential body headed by Yusuf Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the global Muslim Brotherhood.[50] Just a few months after his visit to Austria, Bargash was declared a *persona non grata* by Dutch authorities, which described him as spreading "anti-Semitism, anti-homosexuality, anti-shiite, anti-women discourse, hatred of secularists, glorification of violent jihad and martyrdom, trivialization and denial of terrorism."[51]

The Liga and its youth arm organize many social, political and religious activities, in continuance of the classic multi-dimensional approach of Brotherhood organisations. It is also involved in various charitable activities. In so doing it often partners, alongside other groups, with Rahma Austria, a Vienna-based organisation that is frequently involved in the charitable fundraising activities of the Austrian Muslim Brotherhood milieu. Somewhat proving the circularity of the milieu and how many of its organisations are interconnected, Rahma's secretary is Osameh Atiq, who has occupied similar position in other organisations of the milieu (including the Palästinensische Vereinigung in Österreich, PVÖ, discussed later in this report).

But, other than these important elements, important confirmations of the deep links between the Liga and the Brotherhood come directly from two of the organisation's historical leaders, the Morad brothers. The younger brother, Aiman, stated in a 2011 interview with the *Wiener Zeitung*: "We do not consider the claim that we belong to the Muslim Brotherhood as a criticism. The Muslim Brothers form a global movement. The majority of Muslims share their ideas. We are no exception. But organisationally, we have nothing to do with

47. Greg Palast and David Pallister, "FBI Claims Bin Laden Inquiry Was Frustrated," *The Guardian*, November 7, 2000; Jerry Markon, "U.S. Raids N.Va. Office Of Saudi-Based Charity," *The Washington Post*, June 2, 2004.
48. Andrew Gilligan, "Terror-link Charity Was Due to Host Joint Official Reception with Tory Party," *The Telegraph*, October 3, 2015.
49. "Defense Minister Signs Order Banning Hamas-affiliated Charitable Organizations." Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 7, 2008. http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/pressroom/2008/pages/defense%20minister%20signs%20order%20banning%20hamas-affiliated%20charitable%20organizations%207-jul-2008.aspx.
50. See the Liga Kultur website: http://www.ligakultur.at/#!aktivitaeten-2014/c1wap.
51. Martijn van Gessel, "Zeven omstreden imams zijn niet welkom in Eindhoven," *Dichtbij*, December 22, 2015. http://www.dichtbij.nl/eindhoven/regionaal-nieuws/artikel/4210627/zeven-omstreden-imams-zijn-niet-welkom-in-eindhoven.aspx.

the Muslim Brotherhood. There is no organisation of the MB in Europe."[52]

The older Morad brother, Jamal, has been even more open. Born in Damascus in 1958, Morad moved to Austria in 1978 and soon became one of the most visible personalities of the country's Muslim scene. In early 2013, he gave a long interview to the Egyptian European television channel EgyUro TV. Possibly because he gave the interview at a time where the Muslim Brotherhood was enjoying important successes in various countries during the early days of the Arab Spring, Morad answered the TV show's host, Manal Aboulela's questions about his role in the Muslim Brotherhood and the presence of the Brotherhood in Austria, all with remarkable candor and enthusiasm.[53]

Host: *It is known that you are one of the cadres of the Muslim Brotherhood in Austria, isn't this correct, sir?*

Morad: *Correct.*

Host: *May I ask you, is the Muslim Brotherhood a political or proselytization group?*

Morad: *As a matter of fact, I do not distinguish between the two...I do not believe that there is a separation between religion and politics.*

Host: *There is no separation between religion and politics?*

Morad: *No, not at all.*

Host: *Mr. Jamal, you are saying this and you are living in Europe and you know that the Austrian state separates completely in its affairs and management of the state religion from state?*

Morad: *I do not believe in this.*

Host: *How?*

Morad: *This is just a slogan in Europe. But the reality is that living in Europe, and I've lived in Europe for 34 years, and I'm quite engaged with men of religion and politics from all the groups. Christians and Jews even. But I do not at all find separation between religion and politics by the Christians or Jews. Really. In reality there is no separation. Politics penetrates the bones of the religious orientation and the religious orientation penetrates the bones of politics.*

Host: *How can we not separate religion and politics, when you and a large number of activists in public work, work under the banner and slogans of Austrian groups? An Austrian group means that it's [supposed to be] a civil group and not a religious or political group. And you are saying this while we know about you that you are an activist from a long time ago and you have your history and your positions. But the question forces itself, you all work through—the Muslim Brotherhood—works through Austrian civil society groups. May you explain to me the circumstances and conditions that led you—or can we say that it is a cover for Muslim Brotherhood activity?*

[Morad laughs]

Host: *Honestly, I mean, honestly?*

Morad: *In reality, I'm quite perplexed that you consider this "circumstances." I don't see it as "circumstances." It is the truth and reality, and not "circumstances." And the group [Muslim Brotherhood] doesn't hide [use these things as a cover] in reality behind [civil society] groups and unions.*

Host: *A question, I'm sorry to interrupt you.*

Morad: *We are speaking honestly.*

Host: *You all do not hide behind civil society groups, for example in Austria where we are living, but rather work as you are the Muslim Brotherhood...how?*

52. Stefan Beig, "Unterweigs auf dem 'Weg der Mitte'", *Wiener Zeitung*, February 11, 2011 http://www.wienerzeitung.at/themen_channel/integration/gesellschaft/?em_cnt=224457
53. Video available on Youtube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_RvMLmgRYI (accessed June 24, 2017). The translation from Arabic was done by staffers at the Program on Extremism.

Morad: *I said more than once.*

Host: *Then why didn't you call yourself the Society of the Muslim Brothers?*

Morad: *In reality this has many definitions/qualifiers. Because whoever understands the reality of the Muslim Brotherhood can understand why we called Liga Kultur, the Islamic Cultural Complex or the Mosque of Guidance, because the truth of the proselytizing mission of the Muslim Brotherhood, its essence, its core, and its basis is social work, pedagogical work, proselytizing work. And so, if we did this work under these names, then these names are correct. Real. Not a cover. We do not hide behind walls. We identify ourselves to those who are close and foreigners: what is our orientation, what is the ideology that we hold, and what are the objects we wish to reach. The issue is completely clear.*

Host: *But the civil society groups law allows these groups only social, cultural, media work; but, political work is done through political parties, the institutions of state. Don't you see that as Muslim Brotherhood work—and the Muslim Brothers are political in the first rate, they do political and proselytization work in parallel—so we can call this equation difficult, or what is your view?*

Morad: *Not at all. The reality is that we have been practicing it for 30 years in Austria and there is no contradiction whatsoever because we don't do the social unless behind it is a clear political direction, that is we wish to reach a clear truth, which is clearly defined to all. And so, what we say and what we do totally complies with all Austrian laws and even international law. Because we are civil society, charity, proselytization groups—and as part of this proselytization activity is the political orientation in itself. It is not an issue of political parties, this is an advanced issue, when someone wishes to join the parliament or runs for a political office then at that time he has to found a political party for this issue. But if he wishes to deliver a political, social, proselytizing idea this doesn't require a political party.*

Morad's words seem to settle the debate on whether the Liga Kultur is a Brotherhood organisation. Yet other Muslim organisations active in Austria possess ties to the Liga and, through association, the Muslim Brotherhood. One is the Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich (IGGÖ), which has played a key role in advancing the Austrian Brotherhood milieu's position. IGGÖ, in fact, has been recognized by the Austrian government as the one organisation officially representing and managing the needs of Muslims in Austria according to the Islamic Law (Islamgesetz) of 1912. Traces of Brotherhood presence are not difficult to uncover in the IGGÖ. Its first president (in 1979) was Ahmad Abdelrahimsai, who was also one of the founders of Moslemischer Sozialdienst (MSD) with Ghaleb Himmat. After Abdelrahimsai fell ill in 1999, IGGÖ's presidency was assumed by Anas Schakfeh.[54] The Syrian influence on the organisation increased with the involvement of Jamal and Aiman Morad.

In 1998, the IGGÖ founded the Islamische Religionspädagogische Akademie (IRPA) in order to prepare future generations of Islamic religion teachers in Austrian schools, as well as to avoid the "importation" of foreign teachers.55 IRPA offers a three-year course, with the curriculum culminating in a bachelor's degree. Tellingly located on the premises of the Gemeinnützige Privatstiftung Anas Schakfeh, IRPA has several links to the transnational network of the Brotherhood, making it another "Brotherhood spawn." Among these links, the most telling is the presence of Amena El Zayat (whose married name, Shakir, will be henceforth used) in the position of IRPA director.

54. "Islam: Goldenes Ehrenzeichen für Anas Schakfeh". *Die Presse*, March 19, 2010. http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/religion/547462/Islam_Goldenes-Ehrenzeichen-fuer-Anas-Schakfeh.
55. The IRPA building is located on the grounds of the Gemeinnützigen Privatstiftung Anas Schakfeh, which also hosts the headquarters of the Muslimische Jugend Österreich.

Amena Shakir comes from one of the most prominent Muslim Brotherhood families in Europe. Her father, Farouk, was a mid-level member of the Egyptian Brotherhood who left Egypt in the 1960s to settle in Germany, where he married a German convert to Islam and became the imam of a Marburg mosque.[56] The El Zayats had six children; most of them have also been involved in Islamic activities, from German Muslim charities to student organisations. Bilal El Zayat, for example, is a founding member of the Muslimische Jugend Deutschland (German Muslim Youth) and an officer of the Muslim Studenten Vereinigung (Muslim Students' Union.)[57] Manal El Zayat, who is married to the son of a former Muslim Brotherhood spokesperson in the West, Kamal Helbawy, has also been involved in assorted Islamic organisations throughout various European countries.[58]

The most prominent of the El Zayat children, however, is Ibrahim. Born in 1968, Ibrahim El Zayat headed the Muslim Students' Union before assuming the chairmanship of the Islamische Gemeinschaft Deutschland (IGD). Founded in 1958, IGD has long been headquartered out of the Islamic Centre of Munich, which, as shown, was the first mosque constructed by Muslim Brotherhood members and sympathizers in Europe. IGD represents the quintessential "Brotherhood spawn" in Germany, resembling the Liga in Austria. Public reports issued by the intelligence agencies of most German states openly call the IGD an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, pointing to its historical and ideological linkages to the movement.[59] El Zayat admits that IGD has "roots in the Muslim Brotherhood," but maintains, "We are not led or dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood." He adds that "[i]f you are talking about influence, then virtually all major Islamic organisations in the West, as well as those in the Muslim world, have been dominated by the ideas of the Islamic movement."[60]

El Zayat has also participated in various pan-European organisations. From 1996 to 2002 he led FEMYSO, the Brussels-based youth branch of FIOE. He is also involved in FIOE, the organization to which the Austrian Liga belongs and of which he is a founding member, as well as WAMY.[61] Fluent in seven languages, El Zayat frequently attends high-profile political and inter-faith events throughout Europe, even speaking at the European Parliament and other prestigious venues.[62]

El Zayat's intense political life does not prevent him from being a successful businessman. With a master's degree in economics from the University of Marburg, he runs several property investment companies.[63] One of his businesses consists of buying properties to build mosques, then advising

56. Kamal Helbawy, interview by Lorenzo Vidino, December 2008, London; Yussuf Nada, interview by Lorenzo Vidino, July 2008, Campione d'Italia; Interview with German security authorities, April 2005, Cologne; Filing of the Islamische Gemeinschaft Marburg/Omar Ibn al-Khattab Moschee at the Frankfurt Ausländeramt, January 25, 1990.
57. Interview with German security authorities, April 2005, Cologne.
58. Kamal Helbawy, interview by Lorenzo Vidino, December 2008, London; Interview with German security authorities, April 2005, Cologne.
59. "Islamischer Extremismus und Terrorismus," Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz Baden-Württemberg (April 2006), 29; "Islamistische Organisationen in Nordrhein-Westfalen," *Islamismus.org* (2007), 42-3; Annual report of the Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz, Hansestadt Hamburg (2001), 46; *Islamismus*, annual report by the Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz, Hessen. http://www.verfassungsschutz-hessen.de/downloads/islam.pdf.
60. "Islam and Muslims in Germany: An Overview by Ibrahim El-Zayyat," *Islamism Digest*, Volume 3, Issue 1, January 2008.
61. Interview with German security authorities, April 2005, Cologne; See the FEMYSO website: http://p9445.typo3server.info/56.0.html
62. See for example: a seminar on integration and diversity organized by Alliance of Liberals and Democrats of Europe: http://www.alde.eu/index.php?id=129&detail=16367&album=0.
63. "Islam and Europe: Ibrahim El-Zayyat Discusses the Future," *Islamism Digest*, Volume 3, Issue 2, February 2008, 16.

Islamic organisations on how to obtain building permits and fulfil all corresponding legal requirements. Another business provides consulting services on the German real estate market to wealthy Arab investors.[64] It is no surprise that El Zayat, given his expertise and connections, sits on the board of the Europe Trust, the British-based financial arm of the European Brothers.[65]

El Zayat's public stance towards the influence of the Brotherhood on IGD and himself is particularly interesting, as it exemplifies patterns present in many other Western countries. On one hand, El Zayat has publicly referred to the Brotherhood as "the most important Islamic reform movement of the 20th century," even though he stated that he disagrees with some of its positions.[66] "It stands for the freeing of the woman," he said in a 2007 interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, "for the solution of social problems, it promotes an interpretation of the Koran adapted to the space and time—all goals, to which I subscribe."[67]

On the other hand, El Zayat has staunchly rebuffed claims that he is a member of the Brotherhood. In 2005, for example, he sued a member of the German Parliament who called him "an official of the Muslim Brotherhood," but the court rejected his claim.[68] A more embarrassing situation arose in 2008, when an Egyptian military court sentenced El Zayat to ten years *in absentia* for financing the Egyptian branch of the Brotherhood.[69] El Zayat could easily have dismissed the legitimacy of the Egyptian verdict, which was passed by a military court and based on secret evidence. However, more damaging to El Zayat's claim of non-affiliation to the Brotherhood was the press release issued before the trial by *Ikhwanweb*, the Egyptian Brotherhood's official English language website. *Ikhwanweb* specified El Zayat as one of the "members of the Muslim Brotherhood" unjustly put on trial by the government, prompting El Zayat to contact the website's administrators and request a formal correction. The website later read that El Zayat "is not a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and is not associated with any of the Muslim Brotherhood's organisations."[70] El Zayat's conundrum in this case clearly illustrates the difficulties in defining the Brotherhood in the West.

Ibrahim's sister Amena first became involved in Islamic activities in her native Germany along with her brother. Her most prominent role was head of the Deutsch-Islamische Schule in München-Freiman, a primary school for children aged from six to ten. The school was supported by the Deutsch-Islamische Bildungswerk (DIBW), which the Bavarian Verfassungsschutz judged to be a "sub-organisation" of the IGD.[71] In 2008, Munich-based prosecutor Martin Hofmann launched an investigation into Ibrahim and Amena, accusing them of attempted fraud. He claimed that the two had received financial incentives for the school, even after the non-profit status of the school had been

64. Uta Rasche, "Spinne im Netz der Muslime in Deutschland: Die Macht des Ibrahim El Zayat," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 11, 2007.
65. Extract from the Central Register of Charities Maintained by the Charity Commission for England and Wales, July 21, 2008. http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk; Rasche.
66. Rasche; "Wie Friedlich Sind Muslime?," *Die Welt*, September 7, 2008.
67. Ibid.
68. "Kristina Köhler gewinnt Verfahren gegen El Zayat," Official website of Kristina Köhler, November 16, 2005. http://www.kristina-koehler.de/presse/mitteilungen/2005/kristina-koehler-gewinnt-verfa/
69. Interview with Egyptian government official, December 2008, Cairo.
70. "Ibrahim El Zayat says he is not a member of the Muslim Brotherhood," *Ikhwanweb*, May 6, 2007. http://www.muslimbrotherhood.co.uk/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=6372.
71. "Deutsch-Islamische Grundschule steht vor dem Aus," *Wochenanzeiger München*, October 8, 2005. http://www.wochenanzeiger.de/article/52317.html

withdrawn.[72] Bavarian authorities later shut down the school.[73] By then, Amena had already moved to Austria, where she married former IRPA teacher Ammar Shakir. Under her leadership, IRPA's curricula have repeatedly been under the radar of journalists, scholars, and authorities.

Ibrahim El Zayat also epitomizes a connection with enormous implications for Austria: the linkages between the Arab-dominated Muslim Brotherhood and the world of Turkish Islamism, which has traditionally been represented in Europe by Millî Görüş. El Zayat is also a board member of the Europäische Moscheebau und Unterstützungs Gemeinschaft (EMUG), the German-based company that controls and manages Millî Görüş' mosques throughout Europe.[74] El Zayat's links to Millî Görüş are not surprising and are based on ideological affinities. While Millî Görüş caters to German Turks and IGD to Arabs, the organisations, in the words of El Zayat, "can be considered as Pan-Muslim organisations" espousing the same vision of Islam as a comprehensive system and with ideological roots entrenched in the Brotherhood milieu.[75]

El Zayat's links to Millî Görüş are based on ideological affinities, but as it is often the case among Western Brothers, ideological, religious, and financial connections intermingle with personal ones. El Zayat is married to Sabiha Erbakan, the niece of the late Necmettin Erbakan, Millî Görüş' founder and the godfather of Turkish Islamism. Sabiha, German-born and university-educated, has herself been active in the leadership of organisations for German-Muslim women and of several inter-faith initiatives.[76] Her brother, Mehmet Sabri, is the former leader of Millî Görüş in Germany.

Millî Görüş is an Islamist organisation with a strong nationalistic spin. The movement's main message is one of social justice and strong Turkish identity, both linked to a strict adherence to the vision of Islam as a comprehensive system. Its original plan aims at the restructuring of the social order in Turkey based on the socio-religious concept of *adil düzen* (just order), the abolition of secularism, the creation of a Greater Turkey modelled on the Ottoman Empire and, finally, the establishment of an Islamic world order. German security services have a starkly bleak assessment of the organisation. "Although Milli Görüş in public statements," reads a 1999 BfV report, "pretends to adhere to the basic principles of Western democracies, abolition of the laicist government system in Turkey and the establishment of an Islamic state and social system are, as before, among its goals." [77] Similarly, referring to the group's activities in Germany, in 2000 the BfV stated that "while in recent times the Milli Görüş has increasingly emphasized the readiness of its members to be integrated into German society and asserts its adherence to the basic law [German constitution], such statements stem from tactical calculation rather than from any inner change of the organisation."[78]

Over the last decade Milli Görüş has reversed the trend that saw it in tight competition with the organisation of the Turkish state providing religious

72. Andrea Brandt, "Wendiger Weltmann," *Der Spiegel*, March 25, 2008. http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/spiegelspecial/d-56323061.html; Uta Rasche, "Ein Mann in heikler Mission," August 31, 2010. http://www.faz.net/aktuell/gesellschaft/islamunterricht-ein-mann-in-heikler-mission-1624635-p2.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex_2
73. Monika Maier-Albang and January Bielicki, "Ein Tarnverein für modernen Islamismus," May 17, 2010. http://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/freimann-ein-tarnverein-fuer-modernen-islamismus-1.858651.
74. Interview with German security authorities, Cologne, April 2005; Helmut Frangenberg and Detlef Schmalenberg, "El-Zayat, der Herr der Moscheen," *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, March 20, 2009; *Islamistische Organisationen in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, page 44.
75. "Islam and Muslims in Germany."
76. Biography of Sabiha Erbakan-El Zayat: http://www.pferdt.de/wp-content/uploads/2006/08/participants_fotoprofile.pdf
77. Annual report of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution,1999. Page 165.
78. Annual report of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, 2000. Page 198.

guidance to the Turkish diaspora in the West. Under the stewardship of the Prime Minister and then President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's AKP, the state's religious institutions have become increasingly conservative and Islamist-leaning, in substance espousing a message similar to Milli Görüş'. It has become common for the activities, literature, and personnel of Turkish state religious organisations to resemble those of Milli Görüş.

This dynamic has raised concerns in Western European countries with a large Turkish community, including Austria. Over the last few years, various Brotherhood spawns in Austria have seen an increase in the presence of individuals linked to the religious organisations of the Turkish state, Milli Görüş, or both. One of the most recent and prominent examples is Ibrahim Olgun, who in June 2016 was elected president of the IGGÖ. Born in Niederösterreich in 1987, Olgun studied in Ankara and was until recently the integration commissioner for the Turkish government-linked Turkish/Islamic Union for Cultural and Social Cooperation in Austria (ATIB).[79]

Another noteworthy example is Mustafa Mullaoglu. Mullaoglu lived for many years in Germany, where he held high positions in the German branch of Millî Görüş.[80] He also gained a prominent status within the pan-European network of the Brotherhood, becoming a member of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, the Dublin-based jurisprudential body of the European Brotherhood headed by Yusuf al Qaradawi.[81] Mullaoglu is now Austria-based and has acquired the powerful position of mufti at the IGGIÖ.[82] In March 2017 Mullaoglu had attracted criticism for stating that the hijab is a religious duty for women---a position in line with the ECFR's and the rest of the European Brotherhood.[83] The role of Turkey in Austrian Muslim organisations, particularly those with various degrees of affiliation with the Brotherhood, is likely to be one of the most important developments within Austrian Islam in the near future.

An analysis of the Brotherhood spawns in Austria would not be complete if it did not include the many Palestinian activists operating in the country, who are in various ways linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, specifically to the Palestinian branch of the movement, Hamas.[84] Arguably, the most prominent of this small but active milieu is Adel Doghman, who is involved in various pro-Palestinian activities in Austria and throughout Europe. Doghman's name first made national and international headlines in August 2003, when the US Department of Treasury designated the Palestinian Association in Austria (Palästinensische Vereinigung in Österreich, PVÖ), claiming it "provides support to Hamas and forms part of its funding network in Europe." It claimed that PVÖ, an organisation established in Vienna in 1993 with the alleged goal of providing relief to Palestinians, was part of the Union of Good, a transnational network of charities headed by global Muslim Brotherhood leader Yussuf al Qaradawi that was suspected of

79. "Ibrahim Olgun: Vom Gastarbeiterkind zum Präsidenten der IGGiÖ," *Der Standard*, June 20, 2016.
80. https://publikationen.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10900/63256/vsb2011.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y and https://www.swr.de/report/integrationsgipfel-dialog-mit-extremisten/-/id=233454/did=2060068/nid=233454/8tj31s/index.html
81. https://www.e-cfr.org/
82. http://www.derislam.at/?c=content&cssid=Der%20Mufti&navid=160&par=10
83. https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/islamische-glaubensgemeinschaft-iggioe-raet-muslimischen-frauen-zum-kopftuch/250.185.996
84. To be clear, this does not mean that all, or even the majority of Palestinian or pro-Palestinian activists operating in Austria have links to Hamas. It simply means that, in the relatively large camp of activists supporting the Palestinian cause, some have strong and documented ties to Hamas.

collecting millions worldwide for Hamas. The Department of Treasury's statement also claimed that PVÖ was "controlled by the leader of Hamas in Austria."[85] At the time of the designation, the president of PVÖ was Adel Doghman, who has publicly denied having any links to Hamas.[86]

Following the American lead, Austrian authorities opened various investigations against PVÖ, Doghman, Hani Ibrahim, and Hani Abdelhalim, two additional Palestinian activists involved in PVÖ and in the Palästinensische Humanitäre Verein (PHV), the organisation that took over PVÖ's activities in 2003. After lengthy but unsuccessful investigations which sought to uncover evidence that funds collected by the organisations had been funnelled to Hamas, the public prosecutor had to drop the various cases.[87]

This outcome was identical to that of many similar investigations against allegedly Hamas-linked entities throughout Europe and North America. While investigators could uncover *prima facie* evidence that charities run by known Hamas sympathizers were sending funds to entities in the Palestinian Territories with ties to Hamas, they were unable to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the funds were intentionally going to support terrorist activities. For example, in the Austrian case, authorities were aware that, PHV had sent substantial donations every Ramadan to the al Salah Islamic Committee in Gaza.[88] In 2007, when it designated the al Salah Islamic Committee, the US Department of Treasury called the organisation "one of the largest and best-funded Hamas charitable organisations in the Palestinian territories." Despite this, proving beyond a reasonable doubt with admissible evidence that funds collected in Austria for a purportedly charitable organization (albeit one widely perceived as part of the apparatus of a European Union designated terrorist organisation) constitutes financing of terrorism in an Austrian court of law is a herculean task. The Austrian-based, Brotherhood-linked Palestinian milieu's support for terrorism is alleged, not proven in a court of law; however, it is easy to demonstrate that it has been extremely active in supporting the Islamist position in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and intra-Palestinian tensions. Doghman, Abdelhalim, and other Palestinian activists linked to this milieu have organized countless events and protests in Vienna and throughout Austria. In many of these events, prominent leaders of the global Muslim Brotherhood network are invited as guest speakers.

Most recently, in October 2016, the Koordinationsforum zur Unterstützung Palästinas, an organisation headed by Doghman, hosted the 27th "Palestine conference in Austria."[89] Guests of honour included Dr. Mazeen Kahel, former treasurer of the Comité de Bienfaisance et de Secours aux Palestiniens, the French equivalent of PVÖ that had also been designated by the US Department of Treasury for its role in fundraising for Hamas[90]; Abdellfattah Mourou,

85. Press Center, United States Department of the Treasury. "U.S. Designates Five Charities Funding Hamas and Six Senior Hamas Leaders as Terrorist Entities". August 22, 2003. https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/js672.aspx
86. *Profil* Number 36/2003. In an interview with the German website Antiimperialista (http://www.antiimperialista.org/de/node/5415), Doghman stated: "We are not Hamas. We are not an offshoot of their organisation here in Austria. We are also not an organisation that collects donations for Hamas."
87. "Austria Suspends Investigations Against Palestinian Organization". December 2, 2008. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08VIENNA1766_a.html
88. Stefan Beig, "40.000 Euro für die Hamas". *Wiener Zeitung*, December 3, 2007. http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/archiv/90537_40.000-Euro-fuer-die-Hamas.html
89. Parliament of Austria. "Anfrage". November 10, 2016. https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/J/J_10765/fnameorig_570759.html
90. Press Center, United States Department of the Treasury. "Treasury Designates the Union of Good". November 12, 2008. https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp1267.aspx

who is co-founder and vice-president of Tunisia's Ennahda Party; and Mohammed al Yatim, a member of the Moroccan parliament with the Islamist Justice and Development Party.

The event caused a political controversy because it took place in Vienna's Haus der Begegnung Donaustadt, which belongs to Die Wiener Volkshochschulen (VHS), an association owned by the city of Vienna and dominated by the SPÖ.[91] It was not the first time that controversy arose because members of the Palestinian network had had interactions or received support from parts of the Austrian political establishment, in particular from the SPÖ. In 2007, Doghman was received by then president Heinz Fischer and attended the iftar (the meal that breaks Ramadan's daily fast) of then chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Vienna mayor Michael Häupl, all while apparently still under investigation for financing terrorism.[92]

Analysis of the Palestinian milieu in Austria would not be complete without mention of two prominent activists, Adnan Ibrahim and Hossam Shaker. Born in Gaza in 1966, Ibrahim moved to Vienna in the early 1990s to finish his medicine studies, which he began in Sarajevo before the outbreak of the Bosnian Civil War. He became the imam at the city's Hidaya mosque, but left this position in 2000 reportedly due to disagreements on doctrinal issues with the mosque's leadership. He moved to Vienna's Shura mosque, but also taught at IRPA from 2000[93] until at least 2010.[94]

A charismatic and exuberant personality, Ibrahim has frequently been in the news for many of his controversial statements. Media reports have displayed his very strong positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the justification for the use of violence in it. In 2007, for example, Ibrahim went on a long tirade stating that 'in front of Allah the right jihad is the jihad in Iraq, the right jihad is the jihad in Palestine' and shouting: 'No, we are not terrorists! We are opposition fighters and have the right, also in international law, to call for jihad against American and Israeli occupation. Let us die as martyrs!' 'Do you want to await as spectators what is happening in Israel and Iraq?' he asked his audience, 'Do you want to wait until the earthquake is hitting you? That is happening if you do not give enough material and ideological support, especially to the martyrs. Thereby you will be in paradise and live forever.' 'It is cowardly not to recognize these martyrs because some cowards amongst us do not look for the path of jihad. Do you want to die of an illness like diabetes? For us there is no other way than jihad. The Americans and the Israeli practice jihad against us but we are not allowed to practice jihad because we are terrorists in their opinion.'[95] A sermon by Ibrahim endorsing what he termed jihad by Hamas was also uncovered in 2014.[96]

---

91. "VHS Veranstaltungszentren". http://www.vhs.at/service-fuer-unternehmen/vhs-veranstaltungszentren.html;"Kritik an Geschäften von SPÖ-Netzwerk", *Die Presse*, October 18, 2003. http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/wien/1466365/Kritik-an-Geschaeften-von-SPOeNetzwerk
92. Stephan Beig, "Gerne werde ich es widerrufen". *Wiener Zeitung*, November 30, 2007. http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik/90196_Auf-der-FBI-Terrorliste.html?em_cnt=90196
93. According to a short CV published by the *Wiener Zeitung* together with the print edition of this interview: Stephan Beig, "Auf der FBI-Terrorliste". *Wiener Zeitung*, January 11, 2007. http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik/277937_Gerne-werde-ich-es-widerrufen.html?em_cnt=277937
94. "Zum Beten in den Keller". *Zeit Online*, March 31, 2010. http://www.zeit.de/2010/14/A-Islam-Oesterreich/seite-3
95. Stefan Beig. "Wiener Imam: Lasst uns als Märtyrer sterben", *Wiener Zeitung*, January 9, 2007. http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/archiv/109065_Wiener-Imam-Lasst-uns-als-Maertyrer-sterben.html
96. "Vienna Imam Extols Gaza Jihad and Martyrdom: This is True Jihad, Not that of ISIS". Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), August 29, 2014.https://www.memri.org/tv/vienna-imam-extols-gaza-jihad-and-martyrdom-true-jihad-not-isis

The controversies created by Ibrahim's incendiary statements have often triggered embarrassed reactions from some of the savvier and more politically aware activists within the Brotherhood milieu. Anas Schakfeh, for example, has described some of Ibrahim's sermons about the Middle East as 'emotional' and 'not his taste.'[97] And Omar al Rawi, a well-known Iraqi-born SPÖ politician in the city of Vienna who has often provided a platform to various individuals and organisations close to the Brotherhood milieu, said he could understand why Ibrahim, whose family had suffered from the shelling by Israeli forces in Gaza, 'did not harbour greatest sympathy for Israel.'[98]

Ibrahim appears to be, to some degree, the unmuzzled voice of the Austrian Brotherhood, an emotional preacher who does not sugar-coat his views to appease Austrian political elites, therefore costing the entire Brotherhood milieu substantial political capital. It would nonetheless be incorrect to view Ibrahim, like the entire Brotherhood milieu, as unidimensional or recklessly apply terms such as 'radical' or 'extremist.' There is no doubt that he supports Hamas and violence in places (e.g. Palestine, Iraq) where, according to his worldview, Muslims are under attack and occupation. On the other hand, Ibrahim has also consistently condemned terrorist attacks perpetrated by al Qaeda in the West, such as those in New York, London and Madrid, which he defined as 'crimes.'[99] He has also criticized prominent Austrian jihadist propagandist Mohamed Mahmoud, saying that 'Austria is the wrong country to build a caliphate, the wrong place to introduce all Islamic laws. The crazy people who want this should leave the country and pursue their ideas in Islamic countries.'[100] And while his views on various social issues, such as gender equality or inter-religious relationship are highly questionable, he has called for an end to female genital mutilation.[101]

On the other end of the spectrum, another prominent Palestinian activist in Austria is Hossam Shaker, who is renowned for his careful approach to incendiary topics. Born in Jaffo, Shaker has lived in Austria for 25 years but has seldom appeared on the public scene in the country.[102] Outside of the country, on the other hand, Shaker has made a name for himself as one of the savviest media personalities in the European-wide network of Brotherhood-linked organisations. From moderating the events of the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe to writing for the Middle East Eye, Islam Online and the Cordoba Foundation, Shaker is an independent yet clearly ideologically aligned analyst that seems to use Vienna as a quiet base of operations for his international activities.

II.III Organisations Influenced by the Brotherhood

Over the last twenty years, most Western European countries have witnessed the emergence of strands of Muslim organisations that, despite having some links to the Brotherhood, cannot be con-

97. *Die Presse*, 13.3.2007
98. "Manchmal eine radikale Sprache". *der Standard*, January 9, 2009. http://derstandard.at/1231151797424/Manchmal-eine-radikale-Sprache
99. "Wiener Imam erneut mit Extremismus-Vorwürfen konfrontiert". *Der Standard*, January 25, 2007. http://derstandard.at/2779960/Wiener-Imam-erneut-mit-Extremismus-Vorwuerfen-konfrontiert
100. Kenk, "Die El Kaida aus Fünfhaus"
101. Tarafa Baghajati, " Mädchenbeschneidung: Kommt das Ende einer schädlichen Tradition?". *Die Presse*, February 3, 2011. http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/gastkommentar/631040/Maedchenbeschneidung_Kommt-das-Ende-einer-schaedlichen-Tradition
102. Rawan Damen, "Rotterdam gathering 'to work for Palestinians' rights". *Al Jazeera*, April 17, 2017. http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/04/rotterdam-gathering-work-palestinians-rights-170416070946890.html

sidered either 'pure Brotherhood' or 'Brotherhood spawns.' In most cases, these organisations were founded not by individuals who were full-fledged Brotherhood members, as is true with Brotherhood spawns, but by individuals who began their activism in Brotherhood circles but never cemented deep ties. It can be argued that if the Brotherhood spawns have one degree of separation from the Brotherhood, these organisations have two. Similarly diluted is the ideological influence: while some ideological links to al Banna's thinking are evident, most have developed their own worldview and agenda and moved away from a strict adherence to the Brotherhood's teachings.

They are organisations influenced by the vision, teachings, and tactics of the Brotherhood, all of which unquestionably constitute a model of Islamic activism. These organisations do retain ties with Brotherhood individuals, even though those links are of varying degrees of intensity and depend on the organisation in question. But they are at their core, even more so than Brotherhood spawns, independent entities chartering a new course of Islamist activism in the West—the direction of which is difficult to decipher, given how different it likely is from country to country, from organisation to organisation.

In Austria, the organisation that can be considered as belonging to this third category is the Muslimische Jugend Österreichs (MJÖ). Since its founding in 1996, the MJÖ has become the main youth organisation for German-speaking Muslims in Austria. It is run by a small cadre of mostly second-generation Austrian Muslims from diverse ethnic backgrounds, with an important influx of converts, who tend to be well integrated and high achieving. The organisation is active in a variety of fields, from education to political activism, always keen to project an image of moderation and integration.

MJÖ has often been linked by some of its critics to the Muslim Brotherhood, though the organisation has consistently and vehemently rejected this charge. In 2014, when the magazine *Profil* published an article alleging that link, the MJÖ threatened a defamation lawsuit (a tactic often used by organisations accused of being close to the Brotherhood, in Austria and elsewhere) and issued a statement: 'MJÖ is not financed from abroad and does not obtain support from foundations. It is not a member of the European network of the Muslim student organisation FEMYSO, in which MJÖ only has been exceptional member for a short while (2003–2005). MJÖ has no ideological or organisational connections to the Muslim Brotherhood. There are no Islamic extremist posts on MJÖ's Facebook page.'[103]

A similar controversy arose a few months after the *Profil* controversy, in October 2015, when the *NZZ* uncovered that the MJÖ's female branch JMÖ (Junge Musliminnen Österreich) identified the MJÖ on its website as a 'member of the European umbrella organisation FEMYSO'---something it has previously denied.[104] Dudu Kücükgöl, a former leading member of MJÖ,[105] tried to explain this contradiction in a Facebook post by saying that 'sometimes old documents stay online.'[106] According to historian Heiko Heinisch this is not plausible, since the webpage in question only

103. "Richtigstellung: Muslimische Jugend Österreich (MJÖ)," May 9, 2015. http://www.profil.at/oesterreich/richtigstellung-muslimische-jugend-oesterreich-mjoe-5638610.
104. Elisalex Henckel, "Im Schatten der Muslimbruderschaft". *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, October 28, 2015. https://nzz.at/oesterreich/republik/im-schatten-der-muslimbruderschaft
105. See extract vom Vereinsregister MJÖ 2015 in annex
106. Nina Scholz, "Die Muslimische Jugend und die Muslimbruderschaft". *Kurier*, October 10, 2016. https://kurier.at/meinung/die-muslimische-jugend-und-die-muslimbruderschaft/226.389.326

went online two years after MJÖ's supposed exit from FEMYSO.[107]

MJÖ's desire not to be linked to the Brotherhood is understandable, as it would jeopardize its status as a moderate organisation and a partner of the Austrian government in various initiatives. Its statement is also partially correct, as its links to the Brotherhood are not as strong as some of its harshest critics, who often use un-nuanced analyses, make them out to be. However, links do exist: while they are not substantial enough to qualify the MJÖ as a 'Brotherhood organisation' or a 'Brotherhood spawn', the organisation is certainly influenced by the Brotherhood to some degree.

In a similar manner to other Brotherhood influenced groups throughout Europe, some links are to be found in the group's origins. MJÖ was born out of the initiative of a small group of young Muslim activists in the city of Linz who, in the early 1990s, began regularly crossing the border into Germany to attend services and activities at the Islamic centre in Munich, one of the historical headquarters of the Brotherhood in Europe.[108] The group, which reportedly referred to itself simply as 'the Islamic group,' saw in the better-developed German scene a model of Islamic activism they sought to replicate in Austria. The informal Linz-based group at some point underwent internal dissensions, but a part of it formed the MJÖ.

As seen, details of MJÖ's links to FEMYSO, the pan-European youth and student organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood, are contested and MJÖ tends to downplay its involvement in it. But by its own admission, MJÖ was an 'exceptional member' of FEMYSO from 2003 to 2005. The membership in FEMYSO of an organisation whose founding members lived in the shadow of the Munich Islamic centre is hardly surprising. It is less clear why MJÖ formally broke with FEMYSO and now publicly downplays those links. Potential explanations range from genuine lack of interest in being involved with an organisation like FEMYSO, to a more politically aimed desire not to allow critics a chance to publicly associate the two.

Yet links between MJÖ leaders and individuals who belong to the pan-European Brotherhood network are not difficult to find. Following a pattern that is very common for the international Brotherhood, where business ties are as important as and intertwined with personal, familial, organisational and ideological ones, some connections are financial. It is noteworthy, for example, that several former MJÖ leaders have business partnerships with Mohammed Nabil Abdulazim. Abdulazim is the immediate successor of Bilal El Zayat, Amina Shakir and Ibrahim el Zayat's brother, as the leader of Muslimische Jugend Deutschland, a youth organisation that German authorities consider to be part of the local Muslim Brotherhood milieu.[109] Kevser Muratovic, a former spokesperson of MJÖ[110], currently owns and manages the Vienna-based Hotel Mocca Gmbh together with Abdulazim.[111] Previous managers include Zaid al-Aifari, another

107. Heiko Heinisch, "MJÖ und Muslimbruderschaft" *Die Kolumnisten*, November 12, 2015. https://diekolumnisten.de/2015/11/12/mjoe-und-muslimbruderschaft/
108. Interview with German Muslim activist, February 2016, Vienna.
109. Claudia Dantschke, "Die muslimische Jugendszene". *Bundeszentrale fur politische Bildung*, July 5, 2007. http://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/islamismus/36402/jugendorganisationen?p=all
110. "Deutsch lernen mal ganz anders", *Muslimische Jugend Österreich* http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20111124_OTS0216/deutsch-lernen-mal-ganz-anders
111. "Hotel Mocca GmbH (FM-ID 693781)", *Firmenmonitor.at* http://www.firmenmonitor.at/Secure/CompanyDetail.aspx?CID=693781&SID=0abb8777-84b9-4a9c-beb7-c55d67cf71cf&PID=1

former senior MJÖ representative.[112] Abdulazim also manages Alips Pharmaceuticals GmbH[113], and al-Aifari is president (Verwaltungsratspräsident) of Alips' mother company, Alpinia Laudanum Institute of Phytopharmaceutical Sciences AG.[114] Abdulazim works for another Swiss company that names Zaid al-Aifari as president: New Scope Services AG[115]. According to the Swiss commercial register New Scope Services AG, has merged into NewScope Group Holdings AG[116]. Its president is once again Zaid al-Aifari.[117]

Several current and former MJÖ activists are apparently involved in the hospitality business. Aside from his activities with Abdulazim, al-Aifari also manages a hotel company (Jugendhotel Edelweiss GmbH), which incidentally shares the same address of the Anas Schakfeh Privatstiftung (Eitnergasse 6/7, Vienna).[118] He also manages another company (Z & A Hotelmanagement GmbH) together with Hussein Ali Mohammed.[119] Mohammed is the owner of Alhamra Buchhandel e.U., which is also located at the same address as the Anas-Schakfeh-Privatstiftung (Eitnergasse 6/7, Vienna).[120]

Al Hamra has a frequent presence as a bookseller (sometimes one of a few booksellers, sometimes the only one) at various Islamic events in Austria. In 2016, it was the only bookseller at the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the MJÖ at the Austria Center in Vienna, which attracted more than 3,000 people. MJÖ and al Hamra were criticised because the latter sold books on its website from controversial Islamist writers with questionable material.[121] MJÖ and Al-Hamra issued a statement claiming that these books had 'slipped in' and 'are not consistent with their values' and had been removed instantly from their website.[122] Additionally, the MJÖ claimed that they were 'not responsible for the content of a third party' (even though al Hamra shared an address, Eitnergasse 6, with MJÖ and their leaders have documented ties, the two organisations are legally separate entities) and distanced itself from sexist and homophobic content.

---

112. *Kärntner Woche*, dated 9.11.2005 (not available online); according to an article in *El Mundo* al-Aifari was "the leader" of the MJÖ delegation that had to defend itself in a Spanish court after a row over praying in the Córdoba mosque in March 2010. Toñi Caravaca, "Acusados de un altercado en la Mezquita niegan haber agredido a los vigilantes". *El Mundo*, February 4, 2013. http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2013/02/04/andalucia/1359999978.html
113. "ALIPS Pharmaceuticals GmbH (FM-ID 671968)", *Firmenmonitor.at* http://www.firmenmonitor.at/Secure/CompanyDetail.aspx?CID=671968&SID=0abb8777-84b9-4a9c-beb7-c55d67cf71cf&PID=1
114. "Alpinia Laudanum Institute of Phytopharmaceutical Sciences AG", *Internet-Auszug - Handelsregister des Kantons St. Gallen* http://sg.powernet.ch/webservices/inet/HRG/HRG.asmx/getHRGHTML?chnr=32030627445&amt=320&toBeModified=0&validOnly=0&lang=1&sort=0
115. "NewScope Services AG (FM-ID 686826)", *Firmenmonitor.at* http://www.firmenmonitor.at/Secure/CompanyDetail.aspx?CID=686826&SID=0abb8777-84b9-4a9c-beb7-c55d67cf71cf&PID=1
116. "NewScope Services AG", *Internet-Auszug - Handelsregister des Kantons St. Gallen* http://sg.powernet.ch/webservices/inet/HRG/HRG.asmx/getHRGHTML?amt=320&toBeModified=0&validOnly=0&lang=1&sort=0&chnr=CH02030328173
117. "NewScope Group Holdings AG" *Internet-Auszug - Handelsregister des Kantons St. Gallen* http://sg.powernet.ch/webservices/inet/HRG/HRG.asmx/getHRGHTML?chnr=02030319987&amt=320&toBeModified=0&validOnly=0&lang=1&sort=0
118. "Jugendhotel Edelweiss GmbH (FM-ID 714399)", *Firmenmonitor.at.* http://www.firmenmonitor.at/Secure/CompanyDetail.aspx?CID=714399&SID=d5a238a7-c208-418f-81af-d5600e0f8cc0&PID=1
119. "Z & A Hotelmanagement GmbH (FM-ID 688197)", *Firmenmonitor.at.* http://www.firmenmonitor.at/Secure/CompanyDetail.aspx?CID=688197&SID=d5a238a7-c208-418f-81af-d5600e0f8cc0&PID=1
120. "Alhamra Buchhandel e.U." *FirmenABC.* http://www.firmenabc.at/alhamra-buchhandel-e-u_HIkO
121. David Kirsch, "Dirndl, Schleier und fragwürdige Inhalte: Die Muslimische Jugend feierte Geburtstag". *MENA-Watch*, October 26, 2016. http://www.mena-watch.com/mena-analysen-beitraege/dirndl-schleier-und-fragwuerdige-inhalte/
122. "Klarstellung Bücherstand am Fest". Muslimischen Jugendlichen Österreich, January 28, 2015. http://www.mjoe.at/articles/article/klarstellung-buecherstand-am-fest/

The links to Brotherhood networks are not limited to connections with organisations outside Austria. In the domestic arena, there are several personal links between the MJÖ and its leadership on one end, and the top two levels of what has been termed the Brotherhood milieu in Austria on the other. Most tellingly, MJÖ's headquarters, like IRPA's, are located inside the premises of the Gemeinnützige Privatstiftung Anas Schakfeh, in Vienna's Eitnergasse (on incorporation documents for the Gemeinnützige Privatstiftung Anas Schakfeh, the address indicated was Vorgartenstrasse 193, the same as the private residence of Amena Shakir and her husband Ammar, albeit at a different unit number).[123] One of the Gemeinnützige Privatstiftung Anas Schakfeh's original board members, Austrian convert Maria Hafez, is the mother of Farid Hafez, once a key leader of the MJÖ and currently a prominent Islamophobia expert at the University of Salzburg. Several of MJÖ's leaders also hold or have held positions in organisations like IGGÖ and IRPA.

There is no doubt that these personal and organisational links are indicative of a certain proximity to the Brotherhood. However, the most important level of analysis is the ideological one. Assessing whether MJÖ adheres to all, some (and, if so, which ones), or none of the views of the Muslim Brotherhood is the real litmus test. MJÖ has publicly argued that it does not even have an ideological connection to the Brotherhood.[124] Some of the organisation's critics argue the opposite. The recent revelation that Hassan al Banna's prayer book *al-Ma'thurat* was read during an MJÖ camp, and that the same book was published by MJÖ with an introduction from its former president, Wolfang Bauer (who is currently a teacher at IRPA), might be an indication.[125] It is almost inevitable for any conservative Sunni Muslim organisation created by youths to have some connection with Brotherhood individuals and entities, given the almost monopolistic role the latter hold in the 'Muslim space.' So far MJÖ does not seem to have fully rescinded the umbilical cord that ties them to that milieu.

123. The Shakirs indicated 193/10, while the Stiftung (and one of its board members, Iman Dawoud) 193/3.
124. "Richtigstellung: Muslimische Jugend Österreich (MJÖ)," May 9, 2015. http://www.profil.at/oesterreich/richtigstellung-muslimische-jugend-oesterreich-mjoe-5638610.
125. Elisalex Henckel, "Im Schatten der Muslimbruderschaft," *NZZ.at*, October 28, 2010. https://nzz.at/republik/im-schatten-der-muslimbruderschaft.

SECTION III

Is the Muslim Brotherhood a Threat to Austria?

This report has presented evidence demonstrating that networks linked, albeit with different degrees of intensity, to the global Muslim Brotherhood have long operated in Austria. This presence has frequently been debated in Austrian political, security and media circles, often with quite controversial tones. Equally heated is the debate that almost immediately follows, seeking to assess whether the Muslim Brotherhood poses a threat to Austria and, if so, of what kind.

Some analysts and commentators have framed the question in security terms, arguing that the Brotherhood is a terrorist organisation. The Brotherhood is indeed a designated terrorist organisation in Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and a handful of other Middle Eastern countries. But it has not been designated as such neither by Austria nor by the European Union. In reality, putting the Brotherhood on the same level as al Qaeda or the Islamic State, particularly from a European perspective, constitutes a severe analytical mistake. There is no publicly available evidence of any recent plot conceived by the Muslim Brotherhood, however defined, to carry out attacks against European or Austrian interests, at home or abroad. If posed in these terms, the question of whether the Brotherhood poses a challenge to Austria from a security perspective should be answered firmly in the negative.

Members and supporters of the Brotherhood would argue that this is due to the movement's peaceful nature, its complete rejection of violence and full embrace of democratic means to achieve its hopes for political change. The reality is significantly more complex, even more so because the Brotherhood is not a monolithic movement and positions change, at times substantially, from national branch to national branch and within each branch, from current to current. It is nonetheless fair to say, as the British government's Review concluded, that the Brotherhood has not fully abandoned violence as a political method. Its political thinking, particularly in its most contemporary iterations, does indeed focus on political participation and grassroots activism. But violence is still considered a strategically sound and religiously legitimate option in some circumstances.

The cases in which the Brotherhood supports violence in words and deeds are plentiful. But arguably nowhere is the Brotherhood's contemporary support for violence more evident than in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Not only has the Brotherhood's Palestinian branch, Hamas, been engaging in terrorist activities against Israel since the early 1990s, but leaders and branches of the Brotherhood worldwide, including in Austria, have long raised funds for and endorsed terrorist acts against Israeli civilians. The global Muslim Brotherhood's support for the Palestinian cause has consistently been expressed in religious and millenarian terms, framing the conflict as a divinely sanctioned jihad against all Jews.

Examples of this narrative abound, but arguably the most salient, due to the authoritativeness of the person who uttered them, are the infamous remarks made by Yussuf al Qaradawi on *al Jazeera* on January 28, 2009. 'Throughout history, Allah has imposed upon the Jews people who would punish them for their corruption,' stated the Egyptian-born cleric. 'The last punishment was carried out by Hitler. By means of all the things he did to them – even though they exaggerated this issue – he managed to put them in their place. This was divine punishment for

them.... Allah willing, the next time will be at the hand of the [Muslim] believers.'[126]

Brotherhood members and supporters argue that the group's support for violence is limited to scenarios in which Muslims are subjected to occupation and injustice. They also point out that the Brotherhood has consistently condemned acts of violence perpetrated in the West by al Qaeda and other jihadist groups (although this is not always true).[127] Moreover, they argue that the Brotherhood serves as a safety valve, channelling the energy and frustration of some young European Muslims who might otherwise engage in terrorism into peaceful political activism.

There are indeed some circumstances in which Brotherhood milieus have played a commendable role in preventing violence. And it would be a gross analytical mistake to lump their actions and ideology together with those of the most extreme cross-sections of the Salafist milieu. Yet if the Brothers are occasional short-term firefighters, stemming the flames of radicalisation, they are arguably, at the same time, long-term arsonists. The problem lies in its mainstreaming of a narrative that, brought to one of its logical consequences by individuals beyond the group's control, might lead to violence.

In substance, the Brothers' narrative, spread with the eloquence and pervasiveness that characterizes the group's discourse, is centred on two elements upon which violent Islamist groups can build, and unaffiliated youth on the radicalizing path can draw inspiration from. The first element is the group's justification for violence. As seen, the Brotherhood's rejection of violence is hardly absolute, but rather riddled with 'ifs' and 'buts.' It argues, in substance, that Muslims 'under attack' (a concept that is difficult to define) have a right to defend themselves, including through violent acts aimed at civilians.

The second problematic element of the Brotherhood's discourse is its narrative of victimhood. Drawing on some anti-Muslim incidents and attitudes that unquestionably exist, European Brotherhood organisations, in a similar fashion to their counterparts throughout the West, have purposely exaggerated them and tried to foster a siege mentality within local Muslim communities, arguing that the government and Western societies are hostile to them and to Islam in general. This dynamic has been particularly evident in Austria over the last few years, as Brotherhood-linked entities have used the charge of 'Islamophobia' with abundance, leveraging it at times with good reason (as the problem does exist in Austria), but in many cases without much foundation and for calculated strategic reasons.

The combination of these two elements can potentially be explosive. If Muslims in Gaza have the right to defend themselves, and their use of violence is actually a divinely sanctioned jihad (as a preacher of the Austrian Brotherhood milieu like Adnan Ibrahim states) one can argue, why not also in the West, where, according to what the Brothers say, they are also under attack? The Brothers do not reach this conclusion explicitly; Adnan Ibrahim, as previously mentioned, has publicly condemned acts of violence carried out by jihadist groups in the West. To the contrary, Brotherhood

126. "Sheik Yousuf Al-Qaradhawi: Allah Imposed Hitler upon the Jews to Punish Them – 'Allah Willing, the Next Time Will Be at the Hand of the Believers'," *MEMRI TV*, Clip number 2005, Al-Jazeera TV (Qatar) – 28–30 January 28-30, 2009.

127. It is common for Brotherhood leaders in various countries if not to justify various attacks perpetrated by jihadist groups to at least spread conspiracy theories about them. A notable example of this dynamic came from Mohammed Mursi, who shortly before becoming Egypt's president told Shadi Hamid about the 9/11 attacks: "When you come and tell me that the plane hit the tower like a knife in butter, then you are insulting us. How did the plane cut through the steel like this? Something must have happened from the inside. It's impossible." Shadi Hamid, "Brother Number One," *Foreign Policy*, June 7, 2012.

activists publicly advocate for political engagement and social activism as the solution. It should also be noted that no Austrian-based Brotherhood members known to this author have 'graduated' to terrorism. And it is similarly true that full-fledged jihadists tend to view the Brothers as sell-outs engaged in pointless and un-Islamic attempts to work through the democratic framework.

But the problem lies in the widespread dissemination of the Brothers' narrative and their inability to control its impact on a hot-blooded sixteen-year-old outraged by world events–arguably the profile of the most likely candidate for violent radicalisation. It is easy to see how the Brothers' narrative of victimhood and partial justification of violence can potentially represent the first building block of a radicalisation trajectory that could progress all the way into violent militancy.

The Brothers' narrative's potential impact on radicalisation should be viewed with particular concern given the latest developments in Syria. Austrian authorities have been understandably concerned about the unprecedentedly large number of Austrian residents who have travelled to the war-torn country to participate in the conflict. There are no publicly available indications that the Brotherhood, which has a large presence of entities devoted to various activities on both sides of the Turkish-Syrian border, has been providing any direct operational support to aspiring Austrian jihadists. Indeed, most Austrian volunteers join the Islamic State or Jabhat al Nusra, groups with little sympathy for the Brotherhood. However, once again, the problem lies in the narrative Brotherhood organisations throughout the world have espoused since the beginning of the Syrian conflict. The words al Qaradawi spoke on *al Jazeera* on June 10, 2013, perfectly synthetize the group's stance: 'It is mandatory that all mobilize to go and save our brothers in Syria. I exhort people to go, all those that have the possibility, all those who received training in the army, in combat, in whatever and has the possibility and can go to our brothers in Syria, must go.'[128]

The debate over the relationship between non-violent extremism and violent radicalisation and, more specifically, over the role of the narrative of Islamist groups that do not directly advocate violence in the West, like the Muslim Brotherhood, has polarized policy and academic circles throughout the West since 9/11.[129] The difficulty of obtaining solid empirical evidence to prove any sort of relation (or lack thereof) between them has rendered this dispute more complicated. Most scholars would argue that no blanket answer, leaning one way or the other, can encapsulate the complexity of the dynamics at play.[130]

III.I The Brothers and Social Cohesion

If the Brotherhood's potentially negative impact on security is, for the most part, indirect and difficult to empirically gauge, arguably so too is its influence on social cohesion. Yet, Austrian authorities and the general public should place their largest concerns in regard to the Brotherhood on the organisation's effect on social cohesion.

128. Al Shari'ah wa al hayyat (Sharia and Life), *al Jazeera*, June 10, 2013, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czGLwyoFGGA&list=PL0K2D0QdaP6BQ3dvTbHUHzUXLvxCgGD8h&index=15 (accessed September 17, 2016). Minute 7.30-7.50.
129. Lorenzo Vidino, "The Role of Non-Violent Islamists in Europe," *The CTC Sentinel*, November 1, 2010.
130. See, for example, Peter R. Neumann, "The Trouble with Radicalization," *International Affairs*, Volume 89, Issue 4, pages 873–893, July 2013; and Alex P. Schmid, *Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?* ICCT Papers, The Hague, May 12, 2014 (available at http://www.icct.nl/publications/icct-papers/violent-and-non-violent-extremism-two-sides-of-the-same-coin-, accessed May 26, 2014).

Over the last few years Brotherhood milieus, whether in Austria or in other European countries, have been outspoken about the need of Muslims to become active citizens, fully participating in the political and social life of their countries. Most of their leaders embody this spirit: they are well educated individuals who participate in an array of activities that range from parent-teacher associations to parliamentary elections. They are involved in inter-faith dialogue and their charitable activities have been increasingly aimed at a diverse set of projects, and not just Muslim communities or causes.

Unlike most other Islamist groups and even many conservative but non-Islamist Muslim groups, the Brotherhood does indeed encourage various forms of integration into Western society. Like any other socially and religiously conservative force, the Brotherhood is understandably wary of the potential implications of this integration and therefore advocates 'a conservatism without isolation, and an openness without melting.'[131] Yet the idea of active citizenship has become one of the Brothers' main selling points in Austria and throughout Europe.

Yet, scratching slightly beyond the surface, many speeches at Brotherhood events and the group's texts promote a message that is at times quite different. Virulent condemnations of Western society as corrupt, immoral, and unjust are frequent and go hand-in-hand with a narrative that sees Muslims as better, but under attack–in substance fostering an 'us versus them' mentality that severely undermines social cohesion. Moreover, on certain key issues such as religious freedom, women's rights, and homosexuality, many Brotherhood leaders espouse positions that are severely at odds not just with mainstream Austrian values but also basic human rights.

In many cases these statements are made by Brotherhood members based in the Middle East, while European-based Brotherhood activists tend to publicly adopt more nuanced and less controversial views. This discrepancy can be seen in various ways. It could be argued that it is triggered by an internal debate taking place within a large, diverse, and ever-evolving movement. While parts of the movement, particularly in some Middle Eastern countries, still adopt very conservative and controversial views by Western standards, others, particularly in the West, are evolving and reconciling the Brotherhood's intellectual heritage with liberal values and human rights.

An alternative and more pessimistic analysis points to what some view as the inherently duplicitous nature of the Brotherhood. While trying to reassure Westerners with statements about integration and human rights, Western Brotherhood activists at heart believe in the same vision outlined by their Middle Eastern counterparts. Aware of the repercussions that openly endorsing this original vision would have, they engage in a sort of outsourcing of radicalism. Critics in fact accuse Western Brothers of playing a deceitful game, in which they let non-Western-based thinkers say what they really think about democracy, homosexuality, gender equality, violence, and relationships with the West. Concurrently, the Western-based thinkers maintain their acceptability with Western elites by spinning, downplaying, or refusing to elaborate on such statements Yet, by maintaining their connections with those individuals who make such comments and disseminating their writings within Muslim communities they are able to tacitly endorse them without compromising themselves.

Another fairly common dynamic, in Austria as elsewhere, is the significantly different approaches of the Brotherhood milieu's public faces and some of its less visible representatives. Those members of the milieu that are responsible for interacting with Western politicians, media, and elites tend to

131. Yusuf al Qaradawi, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase* (Swansea, UK: Awakening Publications, 2000).

be extremely 'polished,' generally using moderate tones that make them palatable interlocutors. Yet it is not uncommon, often through investigative journalism, to have evidence which clearly shows that some of the key activists within the same milieu who do not normally interact with the public but hold important positions within the milieu and the community espouse significantly more radical views. The radicalism of their positions and their links to the milieu are often downplayed, sometimes with reason, by the milieu's spin doctors. However, this provides more than reasonable evidence to the claim that the Brothers have one face for the public and a completely different face for the Muslim community.

Two examples of this dynamic surfaced in Austria in the first months of 2017. In February, Austrian media reported that Amir El-Shamy, the leader of the IGGÖ youth (JIGGÖ) and an active member of the SPÖ, had been active in a prominent Salafi organisation, IMAN.[132] IMAN is the Austrian branch of the UK-based but globally active IERA, which is notorious for having several prominent hate preachers among its associates.[133] Another story broke in March 2017, when the magazine News published abstracts of the radical sermons given by the Egyptian imam of Vienna's Attaysir mosque, Zakaria Mohamed, against Christians, Jews and atheists. News then highlighted the links between Mohamed and various leaders of the IGGÖ, which reportedly controls the Attaysir mosque, as well as the Liga Kultur Verein.[134]

As seen, opinions on the real agenda and views of Brotherhood milieus in Europe are almost irremediably split. It is noteworthy that there seems to be a consensus on the negative social impact of the Brotherhood's activities among continental European intelligence agencies. Many of these entities traditionally possess an institutional mandate that is broader than their British counterparts, as they are tasked with monitoring not just direct threats to national security but also the more oblique phenomena of subversion that might threaten the democratic order. Due to this more extensive remit, they have extensively studied the Brotherhood's presence within their jurisdictions and formed an opinion about it–which almost invariably tends to be suspicious if not outright negative.

Germany is a good case in point. 'These 'legalistic' Islamist groups represent an especial threat to the internal cohesion of our society,' argues the 2005 report from the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Germany's domestic intelligence agency, when describing Brotherhood-influenced organisations operating in the country. 'Among other things,' it continues, 'their wide range of Islamist-oriented educational and support activities, especially for children and adolescents from immigrant families, are used to promote the creation and proliferation of an Islamist milieu in Germany. These endeavours run counter to the efforts undertaken by the federal administration and the Länder [states] to integrate immigrants. There is the risk that such milieus could also form the breeding ground for further radicalisation.'[135]

132. Bernhard Ichner, "FPÖ deckt auf: Ex-SPÖ-Kandidat missioniert für den Islam". *Kurier*, March 1, 2010. https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/fpoe-deckt-auf-ex-spoe-kandidat-missioniert-fuer-den-islam/249.156.656; Bernard Ichner, "SPÖ will mutmaßlichen Salafisten loswerden". *Kurier*, March 2, 2010. https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/spoe-will-mutmasslichen-salafisten-loswerden/249.311.550
133. Andrew Gilligan, "How the Muslim Brotherhood fits into a network of extremism". *The Telegraph*, February 8, 2015. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/11398538/How-the-Muslim-Brotherhood-fits-into-a-network-of-extremism.html
134. Anje Melzer, "Vollkommen Schleierhaft," *News*, March 11, 2017.
135. Annual report of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, 2005, page 190.

Belgium's domestic intelligence agency, Sûreté de l'État, described the activities of Muslim Brotherhood offshoots in the country in similarly negative terms:

> *The Sûreté de l'État has been following the activities of the Internationalist Muslim Brothers in Belgium since 1982. The Internationalist Muslim Brothers have possessed a clandestine structure in Belgium for more than twenty years. The identity of the members is secret; they operate with the greatest discretion. They seek to spread their ideology within Belgium's Muslim community and they aim in particular at young, second- and third-generation immigrants. In Belgium as in other European countries, they seek to take control of sports, religious, and social associations, and they seek to establish themselves as privileged interlocutors of national and even European authorities in order to manage Islamic affairs. The Muslim Brothers estimate that national authorities will increasingly rely on the representatives of the Islamic community for the management of Islam. Within this framework, they try to impose the designation of people influenced by their ideology in representative bodies. In order to do so they were very active in the electoral process for the members of the body for the management of Islam [in Belgium]. Another aspect of this strategy is to cause or maintain tensions in which they consider that a Muslim or a Muslim organisation is a victim of Western values, hence the affair over the Muslim headscarf in public schools.*[136]

The AIVD, the Netherlands' domestic intelligence agency, is even more specific in its analysis of Western Brotherhoods' tactics and aims:

> *Not all Muslim Brothers or their sympathizers are recognisable as such. They do not always reveal their religious loyalties and ultra-orthodox agenda to outsiders. Apparently cooperative and moderate in their attitude to Western society, they certainly have no violent intent. But they are trying to pave the way for ultra-orthodox Islam to play a greater role in the Western world by exercising religious influence over Muslim immigrant communities and by forging good relations with relevant opinion leaders: politicians, civil servants, mainstream social organisations, non-Islamic clerics, academics, journalists and so on. This policy of engagement has been more noticeable in recent years, and might possibly herald a certain liberalisation of the movement's ideas. It presents itself as a widely supported advocate and legitimate representative of the Islamic community. But the ultimate aim—although never stated openly—is to create, then implant and expand, an ultra-orthodox Muslim bloc inside Western* Europe.[137]

The Austrian government has never expressed itself as clearly through any of its agencies. Yet the aforementioned documents related to the case of Ayman Ali do show that its security agencies tend to share the pessimistic assessment of most of their European counterparts.[138] In one document, the court summarized the views of the security services thusly:

> *The Muslim Brotherhood is not institutionalized under this name in Austria; however, it characterizes the public depiction of Islam through its intellectual and personal strength. The Muslim Brotherhood does not maintain membership registers; its members are kept secret in all countries to protect them from being identified by the authorities. Nevertheless, there is an accurate set of rules within the Muslim Brotherhood stating what is allowed and what is banned. As soon as loyalty is pledged, all*

136. Report of the Comité Permanent de Contrôle des Services de Renseignements et de Sécurité (Comité R) to the Belgian Parliament, July 19, 2002, http://www.senate.be/www/?MIval=/publications/viewPubDoc&TID=33618007&LANG=fr#2–1171/1_112 (accessed May 22, 2014).

137. *The Radical Dawa in Transition: The Rise of Islamic Neoradicalism in the Netherlands*, AIVD, February 2008, page 51.

138. Landesverwaltungsgericht Steiermark, cases LVwG 70.8-3597/2015-34, LVwG 41.8-37/2016-34 and LVwG 41.8-39/2016-34, Graz, September 9, 2016.

instructions needs to be implemented. There are distinct categories of supporters who have pledged loyalty – from sympathisers to full members.

The document continued assessing the Brotherhood's goals and compatibility with the Austrian state and society. 'The political system aimed for [by the Muslim Brotherhood],' it argued, 'is reminiscent of a totalitarian system, which guarantees neither the sovereignty of people nor the principles of freedom and equality.' 'Such a fundamental position,' it continued, 'is incompatible with the legal and social norms of the Republic of Austria.'

The court went in further detail, expressing its views on one of the core organisations of the Austrian Muslim Brotherhood milieu. 'The Liga Kultur Verein für multikulturellen Brückenbau in Graz,' it stated, 'is an association of the Muslim Brotherhood, in which it is allowed to spread only their ideology, which in its core contradicts the Western democratic understanding of coexistence, equality of men and women, the political order and the fundamental principles of the Constitution of the Republic of Austria.'

It was due mostly to her involvement in the Liga Kultur that the court turned down Ayman Ali's wife's petition to obtain Austrian citizenship. In doing so the court stated that 'due to her close relationship to or membership in the Muslim Brotherhood, the First Applicant [Soha Ghonem] cannot accept those rules of the Republic of Austria which are contrary to the divine order of the Islamic laws; thus, she cannot provide assurance for the assumption that she actually affirms the Republic and that she is neither a threat to public peace, order and security nor to the interests mentioned in art. 8 sec. 2 ECHR.'

These assessments clearly show a deep-seated suspicion on the part of the Austrian security services towards the Muslim Brotherhood and its aims, whether in the Middle East or in Austria. As the following section will explain, the extremely negative assessment from the security services does not bind Austrian policymakers, and various overlapping elements influence their decisions on how to assess and engage Muslim Brotherhood-linked organisations.

It is difficult and beyond the scope of this study to determine whether the optimistic or pessimistic position is correct; the issue is not a black-or-white one. Yet it seems apparent that decisions made over time by various Austrian governmental agencies and political forces to actively engage, and therefore legitimize and promote, organisations linked to the Austrian Muslim Brotherhood milieu are severely at odds with the advice of the entities whose constitutional mandate is to determine whether a group represents a threat to Austrian democracy. Even more problematic from that perspective is the fact that, over time, various organisations linked to the Brotherhood milieu have been entrusted with administering various aspects of Islamic religious education in Austria or, more recently, with aiding in the reception of the large influx of Muslim migrants.[139]

In substance, there seems to be a disconnect, hardly unique to Austria but nonetheless very troubling. On one hand, parts of the Austrian state are publicly and unequivocally stating that the Muslim Brotherhood is a group that has views and goals incompatible with the Austrian constitution and Austrian values, and that its offshoots should be considered a threat. At the same time, other parts of the Austrian state are engaging these very entities, providing them with political legitimacy and financial support. It is not the goal of this report to pass judgment on either position. However, the following section of this report will demonstrate that there is a strong policy inconsistency between these two positions and discuss its origins.

139. Nina Scholz "Flüchtlingsbetreuung durch Islamisten," *Kurier,* May 17, 2017.

III.II The Dynamics of Political Outreach

This report has highlighted that several individuals and entities belonging to various levels of what has loosely been described as the 'Muslim Brotherhood milieu in Austria' have had some form of contact with various elements of the Austrian state. These contacts could be occasional or permanent. They are at times with lower levels of the state apparatus (e.g. small agencies at the local level) but at times they are with the top echelons of the Austrian state, including ministers and presidents. Sometimes they simply entail the presence at an event or some other form of informal interaction, but sometimes they are formalized in partnerships and include the payment of funds.

Irrespective of these different modalities, the Austrian Muslim Brotherhood milieu is not an isolated actor. Rather, it enjoys a level of political integration that tends to be, in comparative terms, higher than that of most of its counterparts throughout Europe. In substance, few other Muslim Brotherhood milieus in other European countries can rely on the same level of access to mainstream politicians, institutions, and public subsidies as the Austrian milieu does.

This is not to say that all entities within the Austrian government have consistently supported the Brotherhood milieu, nor that the Brotherhood milieu has never been challenged by the government. Various voices from both within the Austrian state (in Parliament, in some of the security and law enforcement agencies, in some ministries) and outside (within the academic and media community) have repeatedly expressed their concerns about the activities of the Brotherhood milieu, its close ties with parts of the Austrian establishment, and its potentially negative impact on Austrian society. The aforementioned assessment of the Muslim Brotherhood by Austrian security services in the Ali case are clearly indicative of this attitude.

Despite some efforts, the Austrian state has not reached a consensus of what the Muslim Brotherhood is, whether it poses a threat, and how it should be treated. This dynamic is common in virtually all Western countries, where opinions inside and outside governments swing erratically between optimist and pessimist views of the movement. In substance, no Western country has adopted a cohesive assessment that is followed by all branches of its government. There is no centrally-issued white paper or internal guidelines sent to all government officials detailing how Western Brotherhood organisations should be identified, assessed and, eventually engaged. This situation leads to huge inconsistencies in policies, not only from one country to another, but also within each country, where positions diverge from ministry to ministry and even from office to office of the same body.

Most European intelligence agencies tend to view the Brotherhood and its many Western spinoffs negatively, even though many voices inside Muslim communities have a different opinion and it is not unusual for those agencies to engage with Brotherhood members and entities. But policymakers at all levels are not bound by the assessments of intelligence agencies, and are free to assess and engage Brotherhood organisations as they see fit. This leads to complex dynamics that vary from case to case. Yet, to slightly simplify the situation, a series of factors and considerations, often operating concurrently, influence how government officials perceive and interact with Brotherhood organisations (on all three levels)

a) Knowledge/access to information

While informed government officials exist in all Western countries, many, irrespective of level and position, lack substantive knowledge on Islam, Islamism, and dynamics within Muslim communities. This generalized lack of understanding has severe consequences for engagement issues. Policymakers who ignore the most basic features of

Islam and Islamism are hardly in the position to assess a movement as complex as the Muslim Brotherhood, understand its nuances, and decipher its often-ambiguous language. Yet, they are the ones who often make the decision on whom to engage.

Of course, Western governments do have analysts and experts who possess an extensive understanding of Islamism, but a series of factors impede the formation of a complete body of knowledge on the subject available to all public officials. Firstly, in most countries such analysts are few and overburdened, struggling to keep up with the ever-evolving universe of Muslim organisations. But most importantly, Western intelligence agencies tend to devote only limited attention to Brotherhood offshoots. Some of them, like the FBI, Britain's MI5 and Denmark's PET, are subject to legal limitations that force them to focus only on direct threats to their countries' security. Aside from their suspected fundraising for Hamas, Western Brotherhood organisations are generally not engaged in any activity that falls within the mandate of such organisations, which, therefore, have only a limited knowledge on them.

Other intelligence agencies, like Holland's AIVD and Germany's Bundesverfassungsschutz, have a broader mandate to investigate not only security threats, but all activities that could be considered as a threat to the country's democratic order and social cohesion. These agencies devote more attention to the Brothers, but, after 9/11 and even more recently with the rise of the Islamic State and the related mobilization that it has triggered, have understandably directed most of their focus and manpower to the prevention of terrorist attacks.

In Austria, the Verfassungsschutz does have a relatively broad mandate that allows it to look at the Brotherhood and its local spinoffs. But, understandably, like all of its counterparts throughout Europe, it prioritizes and allocates most of its limited resources on groups that pose an immediate security threat to the country, devoting only sporadic and tangential attention to the Brotherhood.

An additional factor that prevents the formation of a widely accessible intra-governmental body of knowledge on the Western Brothers is due to the very nature of large bureaucracies. The studies of Graham Allison, one of America's most renowned political scientists, are particularly useful in explaining the convoluted nature of the decision-making processes of governments. Allison argues that it is often assumed that a government is a unitary body that has all possible available information in its possession and makes its decisions rationally, after a straightforward process that has identified the state's interest and how best to pursue it. In reality, no government corresponds to this ideal 'centrally controlled, completely informed and value maximizing' rational decision maker. Rather, Allison argues, a government is a 'conglomerate of semi-feudal, loosely allied organisations' each with its own procedures, customs, priorities and personalities.[140]

Applied to the assessment and engagement of the Western Brothers, Allison's theory explains why information does not circulate among various governmental institutions. In many cases, intelligence agencies do not share their knowledge unless prompted, prisoners of an institutional cultural bias that stresses excessive secrecy. In other cases, government officials do not bother to contact intelligence agencies to seek their assessment. Bureaucratic sluggishness, jurisdictional obstacles, and intra-governmental rivalries also contribute to enormous problems in information-sharing.

The result of all these problems is that, in many cases, the choices on what Muslim organisation to engage might be made by a handful of individu-

140. Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Harper Collins, 1971). Page 67.

als who lack any expertise on Islam and Islamism. In many cases, governmental institutions engage Western Brotherhood offshoots after a complete and well-informed assessment process, fully aware of the nature of their interlocutor. Such decision might be taken either because the institution adheres to the optimist point of view or because, independently from its assessment of the Western Brothers, it believes that engaging them could achieve the institution's aim. In many cases, however, the decision to engage Western Brotherhood organisations is made after an uninformed assessment of their characteristics. In fact, cases in which governmental institutions engaged such organisations and later backtracked after discovering more information are not unusual.

One mistake commonly made by various governmental bodies, particularly at the local level, is to overestimate the representativeness of Western Brotherhood organisations. While over the last few years, most authorities have developed an understanding of the extreme heterogeneity of Western Muslim communities, in the past some policymakers relied only on the most religiously orthodox cross-sections of their Muslim communities to be the spokesmen for the entire community.[141] Affected by what Danish politician Naser Khader sarcastically calls the 'mullah syndrome,' policymakers engaged predominantly conservative Muslims, ignoring the large masses of secular and sociological Muslims.[142] This attitude only played into the hands of Western Brotherhood organisations, which, thanks to their activism and resources, could easily persuade Western governments and publics to regard them as spokesmen for the Muslim community.

In other cases, policymakers lack information not on the representativeness, but, rather, on the very nature of the Western Brothers. In some cases, in fact, politicians simply fail to check the backgrounds of organisations they decide to engage, only to hastily return on their steps after they are provided with more information. In his testimony before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, for example, *Wall Street Journal* reporter Ian Johnson recounted how, in an interview, a British member of the European Parliament told him that she enjoyed meeting with representatives of FIOE, the Brussels-based pan-European umbrella organisation for the New Western Brothers to which the Liga Kultur Verein belongs.[143] The MP told Johnson that she considered FIOE a very moderate organisation, unlike the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), whose extremism troubled her. When Johnson pointed out that MAB was a founding member of FIOE, the MP was astonished, embarrassedly admitting she had failed to make such a basic connection.

While Johnson's story was anecdotal, similar cases are common. In other cases, even policymakers with access to the necessary information fail to process it correctly, as was the case of former Dutch Minister of Integration Ella Vogelaar. In 2007, Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* alleged that Yahiya Bouyafa, a local Muslim activist, was linked to various organisations of the global Muslim Brotherhood network and was receiving money from the Europe Trust.[144] The story was particularly important because Bouyafa had been engaged by the Dutch Ministry of Integration as a partner in the ministry's efforts to promote integration and combat radicalisation within the local Muslim community. The article led some members of the

141. Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). Pp. 286-7.
142. Conversation with Naser Khader, Boston, April 2007.
143. "The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe," Testimony of Ian Johnson before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, February 9, 2006.
144. Joost de Haas, "Moskeeen in de ban van Moslimgroep," *De Telegraaf*, March 24, 2007.

Dutch Parliament to ask Vogelaar to publicly explain her decision to work with Bouyafa.[145]

Vogelaar's response, given during a parliamentary session, perfectly exemplifies the inability of many Western policymakers to understand the nature of the Western Brotherhood.[146] Firstly, the minister responded that there was no information indicating that Bouyafa belonged to the Brotherhood, but just that he was connected to a large number of Muslim organisations which sympathized with the Brotherhood. In this response, Vogelaar demonstrated that she did not understand how affiliation to the Brotherhood can be determined. Whether Bouyafa is or is not a Muslim Brother, however intended, is irrelevant. Vogelaar's statement understands affiliation to the Brotherhood solely through formal membership, not understanding that today affiliation can also be established by personal, ideological and financial connections.

Furthermore, Vogelaar assured the Parliament that she had received information from the security services that the organisations to which Bouyafa was linked did not 'pose a threat to national security' and, therefore, she would continue engaging Bouyafa. Thus, Vogelaar appeared to divide candidates for her engagement efforts in two categories: individuals that are directly involved in terrorist activities who pose a threat to national security and therefore should not be engaged, and everyone else, who can be used as partners. Vogelaar seemed to ignore that many cases fit within a third category, composed of individuals and organisations that, while not involved in any terrorist activity and posing no direct threat to national security, might have an agenda and an ideology incompatible with the Dutch government's goal of encouraging integration.

b) Insider's influence

In some cases, acknowledging their lack of expertise on Islam and Islamism, public institutions rely on advisors from the Muslim community to fill the gap. Possessing an understanding of the Muslim community that few people in government can match, many policymakers listen to Muslim advisors with particular attention. The idea is obviously well-founded in theory; in practice, many advisors in this field, as in others, use the government's offer of engagement to attempt to influence policymaking according to their views. Given their high level of education and close ties to political establishments, it is not surprising that in several Western countries Brotherhood sympathizers have obtained such advisory roles and have used them to further the influence of Brotherhood-linked organisations.

c) Personal and political considerations

Bureaucracies are deeply influenced by the views of some of their key personalities. Allison uses the terms 'parochial priorities and perceptions' to refer to the tendency of certain individuals to sway the decisions of a bureaucracy according to their personal ideological positions and political goals.[147] The issue could not be more relevant in the field of engagement with Muslim communities. The implementation of such policies has often been left to the decisions of a single minister or official and, consequently, the personal views and considerations of that minister or official plays a crucial role in determining what Muslim organisation is engaged and how the Western Brothers are perceived. In many cases, government officials form their opinions, either along the optimist or the pessimist line, after an intellectually honest analysis of the nature of New Western Brotherhood organisations and how best to engage the Muslim

145. Questions from the PVV MPs Geert Wilders and Raymond de Roon and answers from Ella Vogelaar, August 7, 2007; interviews with Dutch officials and journalists, Amsterdam and The Hague, May 2008.
146. Ibid.
147. Allison, page 81.

community. It is, nevertheless, common for policymakers, particularly elected officials, to factor in considerations over the possible consequences of their decisions on their political careers.

One factor that clearly influences the decisions of policymakers is the repercussion of their actions on the electorate and, more specifically, on their constituencies. It is therefore unsurprising that many policymakers take certain decisions related to engagement of Muslim community with the unspoken yet clear intention of obtaining electoral successes through it. The 'Muslim vote' already determines the outcome of contested national elections in several Western countries and is likely to increase in importance as Muslim populations are growing at a remarkably fast rate. This phenomenon is particularly significant at the local level, given the tendency of Muslims to concentrate in particular urban areas.

Sensing an opportunity, the Western Brothers have often tried to portray themselves as the key to this growing electoral block. Brotherhood organisations distribute guides on how to vote, organize voter registration drives and indicate what candidates should be supported throughout their network of mosques. Western politicians running in districts with a significant Muslim population cannot afford to be indifferent to such initiatives and, in many cases, decide to engage in various forms of mutual support with Brotherhood organisations. In many Western countries, the Brothers have established clientelist relations with various political forces, at the national or local level, in which the Brothers promise to mobilize their resources in support of the party in exchange for financial and political rewards.

In reality, many have questioned the existence of a monolithic 'Muslim vote.' Undoubtedly, some voting patterns exist. Muslims in Europe have traditionally voted for parties of the Left, even though that seems to be a broader tendency common to most immigrant groups. Muslims do not necessarily vote as a predetermined bloc, blindly casting their ballots as their co-religionaries do. Rather, their political preferences mirror the socio-political diversity of their communities. It is likely that second and third generation Western Muslims will further diversify their vote in the future. All of these factors cast immense doubt on the Western Brothers' claim to be able to 'deliver the Muslim vote'. Have Muslims voted for certain parties because local Western Brotherhood organisations told them to or would they have made that choice in any case? Given the difficulty in finding a definitive answer to the question, many policymakers lean towards a safe strategy and maintain their clientelist relationships with the Brothers.

It is unclear and nearly impossible to prove whether the Brothers can actually direct the Muslim vote towards a candidate of their choosing; unquestionably, they can influence the political arena by severely damaging the reputations of politicians and other public figures in Muslim communities by accusing them of anti-Muslim sentiments and, more specifically, of Islamophobia. First used by French orientalist Etienne Dinet in 1922, the term Islamophobia has become a common term in today's political jargon.[148] Defined as 'an outlook or world-view involving an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims, which results in practices of exclusion and discrimination' in the influential 1996 report by the British-based Runnymede Trust, Islamophobia describes an unpleasant phenomenon that exists in all Western countries.[149]

Parts of Western society do indeed harbour unjustified fears towards Islam, and Muslims have un-

148. Jocelyne Cesari, *Securitization and Religious Divides in Europe: Muslims in Western Europe after 9/11.* Available at: http://euro-islam.info/ei/wp-includes/pdf/securitization_and_religious_divides_in_europe.pdf

149. *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, Runnymede Trust, 1997.

questionably been subjected to acts of discrimination and racism that warrant attention. But today, Islamophobia has also become a useful political weapon in the Western Brothers' quiver. Within the Muslim community, the Brothers often exaggerate episodes of actual or perceived Islamophobia to reinforce the feeling of 'community under siege' and portray themselves as the only defenders of the community.[150] Externally, it has become an extremely effective tool to silence critics and force policymakers to work with Brotherhood organisations. The charge of Islamophobia is brought not just against those that criticize Islam, but, rather, against those that criticize the Brothers. Any criticism of a Western Brotherhood leader or organisation is met with an accusation of racism and Islamophobia. In some cases, the Brothers, always aware of what chords to strike, tailor their charges according to the country in which they operate. Therefore, in the United States those who criticize them are guilty of McCarthyism, in Italy of fascism and, in most others, of post-colonial mentality.

The use of the Islamophobia weapon has unquestionably silenced many critics of the New Brothers and led many policymakers to engage them out of fear of being tarnished as a racist or Islamophobe. These labels, whether deserved or not, are hardly claims that any public figure and, in particular, any politician would take lightly. The mechanism ingenerated by such tactic is perfectly exemplified by the discussion that surrounded a 2008 hearing before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs on whether the State Department was inadvertently funding Islamist organisations in the Middle East. Several American-based New Brotherhood organisations criticized the committee's choice of witnesses and demanded that one of their experts be included, stating that doing otherwise would signal Islamophobia. Democratic Congressman Brad Sherman, the committee's chairman, refused to cave in and addressed the demands during the hearing. 'I think one of the greatest fears of people in the United States is somebody may call you a racist...they may call you an Islamophobe,' stated Sherman. 'And what we've seen with some of these organisations is their message is clear: 'Give us money or we'll call you an Islamophobe."[151] While Sherman did not bulge, other politicians might determine that the political costs of doing so are too high.

d) Satisficing

Graham Allison notes "the tendency of overburdened bureaucracies to satisfy themselves with finding 'a needle in the haystack rather than searching for the sharpest needle in the haystack.', a process which he terms 'satisficing'.[152] Rather than seeking the optimal solution bureaucracies often opt for quick fixes that meet the criteria of adequacy and solve pressing needs, ignoring long-term repercussions. Applying this concept to engagement with Muslim communities, satisficing explains why in some cases, Western governmental institutions decide to engage with Western Brotherhood organisations rather than competing groupings.

As many Western policymakers have realised, efforts to find partners within the Muslim community that are representative, reliable, and moderate are often crushed due to the fact that very few organisations satisfy even the first requirement. As a consequence, policymakers have often concluded that the alternative was between engaging organisations

150. Munira Mirza, Abi Senthilkumaran and Zein Ja'far, *Living Apart Together: British Muslims and the Paradox of Multiculturalism*, report for the Policy Exchange, 2007. Page 18.

151. Foreign Aid and the Fight Against Terrorism and Proliferation: Leveraging Foreign Aid to Achieve U.S. Policy Goals, Hearing held by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, July 31, 2008.

152. Allison, page 72.

that seemed vaguely close to meeting the requirements or engaging nobody altogether. Therefore, Western Brotherhood organisations, which have consistently claimed to represent the majority of Western Muslims, have often been accepted as dialogue partners. 'The government is always looking for organisations to talk to,' explains Ursula Spuler-Stegemann, the dean of German experts on Islam, 'and the Islamists are the ones coming.'[153] The Western Brothers have often been the lowest-hanging fruit, the most visible and loud among Muslim organisations, and, as such, have been engaged by Western governments looking for the next best thing to a fully representative interlocutor.[154]

In many cases, policymakers agree with at least parts of the assessment made by pessimists and look at the Western Brothers with a degree of suspicion. Despite their doubts, the need to find a partner overrides their suspicion. Moreover, bureaucracies tend to prefer to work with established organisations that in some way reflect their own structure. For the most part, only Western Brotherhood organisations have the resources to be structured in a way that resembles a bureaucracy, with a legally registered status, a predefined structure, a headquarters, and a full-time professional staff. Competing organisations, lacking such structure and the visibility of the Western Brothers, experience more difficulties in obtaining access to governments.[155] Western Brotherhood organisations are therefore sometimes engaged as sole partners in order to satisfy the short-term need of finding interlocutors in the Muslim community, and only limited thought is given to what the long-term repercussions of such a relationship could be.

e) Change through engagement

Despite all the difficulties in policymaking on this issue, in some cases the decision to engage Western Brotherhood organisations is reached after a fully informed assessment independent from personal and political considerations, and in order to achieve a carefully thought-out plan that takes long-term implications into consideration. In many of these cases, a gradual engagement of Western Brotherhood organisations is seen as the only possible way to deal with them and a way to influence their development in the direction desired by the government. Most government officials, while perhaps not fully embracing the pessimist point of view, recognize that there are aspects of the Western Brotherhood's ideology that they find troubling. Yet they find themselves in front of a dilemma: how is the state to deal with organisations that do not fully recognize core Western values, yet do not advocate violence in the West and have achieved a position of significant influence?

Most government officials believe that refusing any dialogue with the Western Brothers is an ideological and impractical position. Not only do the Brothers have a position of influence that cannot be ignored, but pushing them aside could also lead to a radicalisation of the movement. At the same time, they acknowledge that it is unclear whether the Western Brothers' social agenda is compatible with the goal of a cohesive society and believe that empowering them by selecting them as partners is a dangerous choice. Therefore, many government officials seem to opt for a sort of middle ground, engaging Brotherhood organisations in a constructive dialogue while trying to avoid empowering them. They believe that government officials should establish forms of permanent dialogue with

153. Carla Powers, "New Imams," *Newsweek*, January 17, 2006.
154. Brigitte Marechal, "Dealing with European States," in Brigitte Marechal, Stefano Allievi, Felice Dassetto and Jørgen Nielen, *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003). Page 180.
155. Stefano Allievi, "Muslims and Politics," in Brigitte Marechal, Stefano Allievi, Felice Dassetto and Jørgen Nielen, *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003). Page 198.

Brotherhood organisations while, at the same time, refraining from granting them financial and political support.

Some proponents of this practical approach argue that gradual engagement enables the government to know more about the Brothers' activities and aims, cynically applying the doctrine of 'keeping your friends close but your enemies closer.' For the very reason that they question some of their aims, some government officials argue, they should maintain an open dialogue with them. Moreover, it is often argued that participation in the political system can have a moderating effect on the Western Brothers.[156] In the Muslim countries where they have participated in the process, Islamist groups have indeed abandoned, at least publicly, some of their more ideological positions. Being forced to deal with practical issues, Islamists are forced to leave their ideological bubble, review their positions, and compromise.[157]

Many believe, or, at least, hope, that a similar process will take place with the Western Brothers. French scholar Gilles Kepel, one of the foremost European experts on Islamism, while being very critical of the Western Brothers' aims, also believes that a graduated engagement will eventually change the movement. In his argument, he compares the Western Brothers to the Euro-Communists, the various Western European Communist movements that broke with the Soviet Union in the 1970s. As the Euro-Communists began a process of moderation that made them abandon their dreams of creating the dictatorship of the proletariat, the same might happen with the Western Brothers, who will eventually abandon the dream of a global caliphate and break with the parts of their heritage that are incompatible with life in a Western democracy. 'In the same way,' argues Kepel, 'several decades ago, the children of proletarian and communist immigrants to France from southern and eastern Europe fell under the influence of the Communist party and the trade unions, while all the time engaged in a process of gradual integration and advancement in society. Today, these French citizens belong to the *petite bourgeoisie*, having lost all links with both Marxism-Leninism and their parents' native countries.'[158]

It is, of course, impossible to predict whether the Western Brothers will undergo the same evolution of the Euro-Communists. The rhetoric of some of the leaders of the new generation of Western-born Brothers seems to reinforce this view, even though pessimists might argue that they are simply better skilled at deceiving Westerners. In any case, graduated engagement leading to a dilution of Islamist ideology seems to be the idea guiding many policymakers in their approach to Western Brotherhood organisations.

---

156. Jonathan Laurence, "Integrating Islam: A New Chapter in 'Church-State' Relations," report for the Transatlantic Task Force on Immigration and Integration, October 2007.
157. See, for example, Amel Boubekeur, "Political Islam in Algeria," Centre for European Policy Studies working paper no. 268, May 2007.
158. Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). Pp. 369-70.

Conclusion

The Muslim Brotherhood is an extremely complex, opaque, and ever-evolving movement. It is even more difficult to decipher in its Western setting, where many of the individuals, entities, and networks that are in various ways linked to it possess no formal ties to the movement or adapt its teachings to different degrees. Given these complexities, it is understandable that policymakers in Austria, as in virtually every other Western country, have often reached only a partial understanding of the Brotherhood and its affiliated networks. Assessing the movement's many identities and balancing the sometimes conflicting interests involved in engagements with the Brotherhood is a daunting task. As one of America's most seasoned counterterrorism officials, Juan Zarate, has fittingly stated: 'The complication is that they [the Muslim Brothers] are a political movement, an economic cadre and in some cases terrorist supporters. They have one foot in our world and one foot in a world hostile to us. How to decipher what is good, bad or suspect is a severe complication.'[159]

Prescribing a blanket policy towards the movement is a difficult task. Rather, a case-by-case approach based on the specific circumstances and interests pursued might be the best way for any government seeking to define its stance towards the Brotherhood. A realist approach might suggest that in some exceptional cases, tactical engagements with elements within the movement might be productive. Yet, it is clear that in most cases the interests pursued by the Brotherhood are diametrically opposed to the government's. It can also be argued that, even though the two levels cannot be completely separated, policies adopted abroad should not necessarily be replicated domestically (and vice versa).

What does the Brotherhood (intended in the broad sense used throughout the report) in Austria stand for? What message do Brotherhood networks, mosques, meetings, and literature spread? What are the links between Austrian-based activists and Brotherhood networks abroad? Do they receive foreign funding? And if so, how important is it? These are very important questions with concrete policy implications. The only way that Austrian government entities, whether at its highest levels in Vienna or in small city councils, can successfully answer them and deal with the Brotherhood and its influence is by possessing an extensive understanding of its activities, mechanisms and aims. In this regard, an internal review by the Austrian government similar to the review in the United Kingdom conducted in 2014 would be extremely helpful. Similarly, more academic studies seeking to better understand the political, ideological, financial and personal dynamics related to Brotherhood-linked organisations would enormously help in providing a much-needed better understanding of what it is and whether it poses a challenge to Austria.

159. John Mintz and Douglas Farah, "In Search of Friends Among the Foes: U.S. Hopes to Work with Diverse Group," *Washington Post*, September 11, 2004.